Commentary
March 1999

Life, Liberty, Property
Richard Pipes

On Rewriting the Past
Cynthia Ozick
Gabriel Schoenfeld

Poison-Pen Pals
Joseph Epstein

Justice for Pinochet?
Elliott Abrams

Jacob in Love
Leon R. Kass

Tchaikovsky's Passion
Terry Teachout

Books in Review
Elizabeth Powers • Dan Seligman • David Singer
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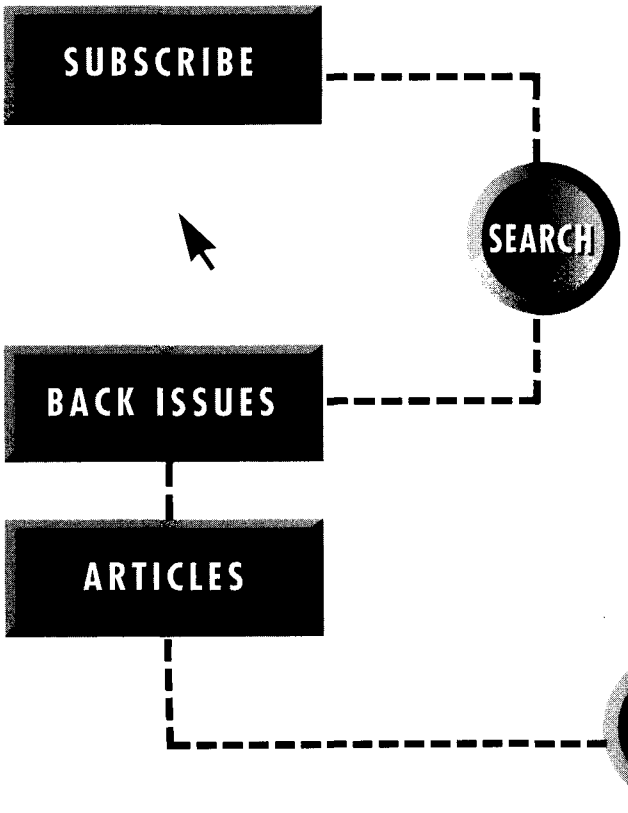

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Commentary
March 1999

Letters from Readers

Parents and Children

To the Editor:

In "What are Parents For?" [December 1998], Mary Eberstadt expresses an understandable frustration with America's cult of scientific child-rearing and its tendency to reduce parenting to a utilitarian and technical exercise. And she does a masterful job of enumerating Judith Rich Harris's many successful criticisms of conventional expert pronouncements in her book, *The Nurture Assumption*. However, Mrs. Eberstadt's attempt to turn the book into a moral treatise on the "elemental simplicity" of the parent-child bond is like trying to turn B. F. Skinner into a latter-day Rousseau.

Mrs. Eberstadt writes that it "defies comprehension" that someone reading *The Nurture Assumption* would conclude that how parents treat their children is of no great import. But what else is a reader to make of Judith Rich Harris's assertion that early experience is "irrelevant" to children once they step outside the house, or of statements like "Occasionally families do socialize their children. But usually they don't"? And what other conclusion could be drawn from Mrs. Harris's list of children who were abandoned, mistreated, or ignored but who nevertheless "turned out all right" and grew up to lead "effective lives"?

In fact, Mrs. Harris has publicly proclaimed her purpose in writing *The Nurture Assumption*, and it is strikingly at odds with Mrs. Eberstadt's concerns. "I want to tell parents that it's all right," she told the *New Yorker*. "If they knew that it was OK to have a child and let it be reared by a nanny or put in a day-care center or even to send it to a boarding school, maybe they'd believe it would be OK to have a kid." Doubtless most kids who go to boarding school or are reared by nannies "turn out all right." But these words are far more consistent with those experts who are "putting children last," to use the title of a previous article by Mrs. Eberstadt in these pages (May 1995), than with a philosopher interested in getting us to ponder the "elemental bond."

Judith Rich Harris makes much of (and Mrs. Eberstadt seems impressed by) the fact that she is an outcast from the child-development priesthood. But between her announced purpose and her actual argument, it is clear that her book is a fine example of the hubris and shallowness that infects much research in the field. Like her colleagues, she is ready to draw broad, even radical, conclusions from meager data and pass them off as crystalline truth. And while she may question her colleagues' conclusions, she never doubts their bald categories of human behavior, though they so poorly evoke the nuances of inner life. When she, as Mrs. Eberstadt notes, is unable to distinguish between "personality" and "character," she demonstrates the limitations of her field. Research psychology is a business that can measure superficial behavior—impulsiveness, say, or aggression—but it has no way to measure the inner conflict that goes along with controlling these tendencies. Likewise, Mrs. Harris stays on the surface when she addresses the kinds of influence parents might have on children. She seems satisfied to define "turning out all right" as having husbands and wives, children and careers—becoming "socialized." One study of Eritrean orphans, she informs us, found they too turned out OK. "The only important difference was that the orphans were unhappier." Catch that word "only."

"Bad science in the service of a good cause is no service at all," Mrs. Eberstadt tells us in criticism of

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America's nearly century-long expert recitation of the idea that parents control their children's development. But surely bad science in the service of a bad cause—the idea that it does not much matter what we do with our children—is even worse.

KAY S. HYMOWITZ
City Journal
New York City

MARY EBERSTADT writes:

The thoughtful letter of Kay S. Hymowitz amounts to a single polemical point: that Judith Rich Harris's *The Nurture Assumption* is fatally flawed by its author's supposed intention to produce a popular brief for parental laxity and neglect. This line of attack restates a theme popular among many of the book's critics, who similarly chose to focus on Mrs. Harris and her supposed personal motivations rather than on the argument and analysis in her book.

I disagree with this approach, for two reasons. First, and most generally, it seems obvious to me that whatever Judith Rich Harris *thought* she was proving (and the record is more ambiguous here than the quotations from the *New Yorker* interview would indicate), the more interesting point is what her book *does* prove. The weight of argument, as I indicated in the piece, is "positively subversive" of some current cherished ideas, including the notion that prolonged parental absence, especially during the crucial early years of development, is not harmful.

Second, it seems that Kay Hymowitz, like many other critics, fails to grasp the purpose behind Judith Rich Harris's observation that many neglected and even traumatized children *do* "turn out all right." Such examples are produced in the book as evidence of a general point—that "there is no law of nature that says misery has to have sequelae." In other words, if parents do indeed have the kind of power to determine their children's lives that we commonly assume they do, then we should expect that battered children, for example, will invariably batter their own offspring; that the children of unhappy homes will go on, *ipso facto*, to form unhappy homes of their own; and so on. Yet obviously this does not always happen, and in fact happens much less frequently than any version of the nurture assumption would predict. To ask why, as Judith Rich Harris does, and to conclude from such an inquiry that parental influence is more limited than we commonly suppose it to be, is not at all the same thing as sanctioning neglect and abuse. To conflate these points as so many critics have chosen to do is a dereliction not easily explained.

Kay S. Hymowitz is right: *The Nurture Assumption* is no moral treatise. But it is surely legitimate to draw a moral from the book's sustained and compelling attack on the past century or so of developmental psychology. As Judith Rich Harris herself summarizes her case near the end of her book: "Children are not empty canvases on which parents can paint their dreams. . . . Love your kids because kids are lovable, not because you think they need it." Many people, as the debate over the book shows, have found this to be an amoral, perhaps even immoral idea. I believe, for reasons outlined in my essay, that it is something else—a bracing corrective to the current model of enlightened child-rearing, one whose main result thus far has been, however paradoxically, the production of a generation of the best-off, most driven, most worried-over, and most heavily-scheduled and -schooled neglected children in historical sight.

Boys

TO THE EDITOR:

Midge Decter, in "What Are Little Boys Made Of?" [December 1998], waxes nostalgic about the boys of her youth, immediately before and during World War II, who were pure of heart and perpetually testing themselves through a variety of masculine pursuits. She sees this purity and need for testing as the natural condition of boys, enabling them to become the patriotic, self-sacrificing, and heroic men who went off to war on behalf of good against universally recognized evil.

She contrasts these radiant examples of boyhood with the indolent, sulking, murmuring adolescents of the 1960's, a generation of uninspired, unpatriotic draft-dodgers. According to Miss Decter, the difference between the national triumph of World War II and the darker mood of the Vietnam era was the difference between the boys of the 40's and the adolescents of the 60's and the societies that produced them. Today, Miss Decter worries, "it is very difficult for a boy to grow up with masculine honor" because "he is standing at the tail-end of a veritable whirlwind of anti-male sentiment."

In real life, it was never as easy to acquire "masculine honor" as Miss Decter's romantic fantasy suggests. Nor is it so difficult now. My recollection of the playground of my youth (I was born in 1946) is that it was as much a field of tyranny as of honor. The testing that made such a positive if incomprehensible impression on Miss Decter was not about all the boys, or even most of the boys, trying to outdo one another in feats of athletic prowess. It was about the few truly skilled competitors hogging the action while the less skillful played the outfield. I spend a half-hour each week on a fourth-grade playground and can report that the situation is no different today.

Miss Decter's concern about the feminization of today's boys is shared by many of the 60's and 70's feminists, now moms, who fought to shape the national attitudes she so decries. My eighteen-year-old son has a friend whose mother is an ardent feminist. A few years ago, she suddenly became worried that her son might turn out (here I use her word—my own fully sensitized late-90's mind rejects such vocabulary) "pussified."

She, and Miss Decter, need not have worried. Our boys love nothing better than to challenge one another and terrify their parents with feats of derring-do on the ski slopes, rock-climbing, cliff-jumping, and lately sky-diving.

The change since Miss Decter's youth is that these activities are now readily available to girls. It was the

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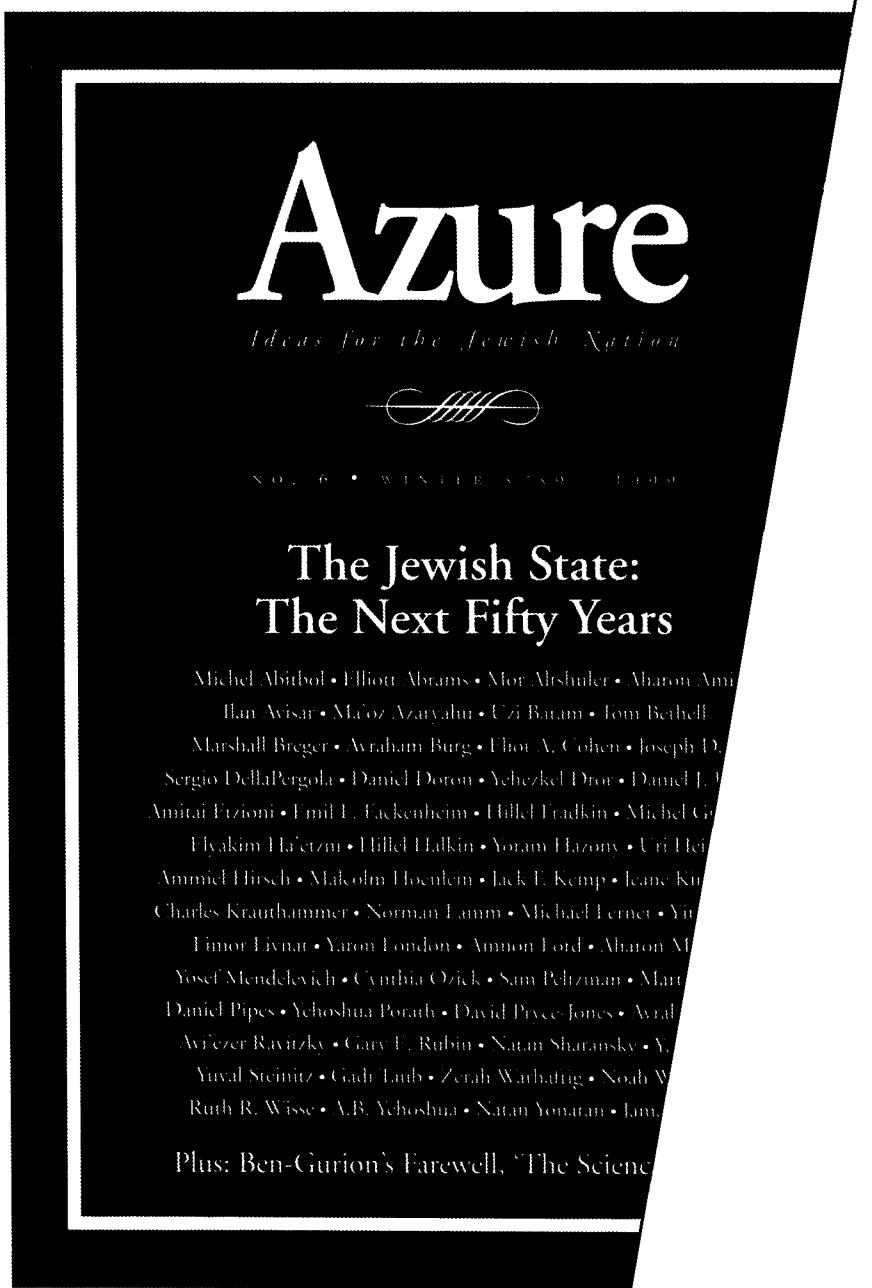

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girls of her youth, not the boys of today, whose natures were constrained by social contrivances. I have a twenty-year-old daughter who is vigorous, aggressive, and athletic and, I am convinced, on her way to running the world. Still, she manages to giggle away many a pubescent afternoon watching *General Hospital* and doing her nails with her girlfriends. Thanks to the feminists, she has had and will continue to have the opportunity to be her best self.

So Miss Decter can save her concern and her ink. Confounding the world views of romantic conservatives and militant feminists alike, girls will be girls, boys were, are—and forever will be—boys.

CHARLES D. KOTEEN
West Hartford, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR:

Midge Decter's article contains much insight. But her reach is shorter than her grasp—her grasp of psychiatric disorders, that is. She states:

> [A] few million boys have been diagnosed as suffering from a serious neurological condition known as attention-deficit disorder (ADD); and, to the great relief of bored and incompetent schoolteachers, the experts have further prescribed that the condition be brought under control with a substance called Ritalin (street name: speed). For some strange reason, taking this amphetamine has the effect of quieting young boys.

For some strange reason, Miss Decter just plain does not know of what she writes. Apparently, she has some strange need to fit this well-researched psychiatric disorder into an ideological vision. Obviously she has neither read any psychiatric literature nor talked to any families with a member suffering from ADD—and there are many, both males and females.

Please, Miss Decter, do not succumb to silly media stereotypes about psychiatric disorders. Do your homework. Your creative track record and standards of excellence are much too impressive to expect anything less.

STEVEN J. CERESNIE
Plymouth, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR:

Midge Decter's obtuseness and ignorance of matters psychological is stunning. Attention-deficit disorder is a serious disability that has profound negative effects on children as well as adults. School performance is crippled, and self-esteem is damaged. Ritalin is very effective; it restores good performance and rescues children from feelings of helplessness and demoralization. For a child who is floundering, Ritalin is a lifesaver. To dismiss the treatment and the diagnosis of ADD is irresponsible and mean-spirited.

Miss Decter is correct in saying that the causes of murder are not fully understood. She is not correct in dismissing as feeble the interpretations of mental-health professionals, as if one explanation could fit all. The problem of understanding violence is one that psychologists have been working on for years with only partial success. The schoolchildren who murdered their peers were possibly crazy, possibly had too free access to guns, possibly were too influenced by the violence shown in the media, possibly were depressed, possibly were neglected by parents, or all or some of the above. Miss Decter's dismissive attitude certainly does not help us find solutions, and her own feeble attempt at an answer is not very helpful, unless we turn the clock back, keep girls in their place, and have an occasional war.

ALLEN RUTCHIK
Clinical Psychologist
Miami, Florida

TO THE EDITOR:

Many of the issues Midge Decter raises are valid in part, but none provides definitive answers in our effort to alleviate antisocial behavior in our youth

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The Way We* See It

THE ABILITY TO DEFINE AN OPPONENT IS UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZED AS A DECISIVE EDGE IN POLITICS. In America, liberals have come to possess that ability through their pervasive influence in the culture. As a result, the political spectrum runs the gamut from "liberal" to "moderate" to "conservative" and then "right," without the balance of a political "left." No one—not the *New York Times*, nor the *Washington Post*, nor the Republican leaders of the House—refers to Minority Whip David Bonior or Black Caucus chair Maxine Waters as leftists. But everyone refers to Newt Gingrich and Trent Lott as men of the right.

IS THERE A LEFT IN AMERICA? Liberals regularly deny it. But fifty-eight Democratic members of the House (including Bonior and Waters) have formed the Congressional Progressive Caucus to work on a left-wing political agenda.

IT IS TIME TO RE-EXAMINE THE LABELS THAT DEFINE AMERICAN POLITICS. It is too late to restore the term "liberal" to neo-conservatives or Goldwater Republicans, where it belongs. But it is not too late to stop calling people who are actually leftists, liberal. That's the way we see it at ***FrontPage***.

LEFT

FAR LEFT	LEFT	LEFT LIBERAL	MODERATE LIBERAL
Noam Chomsky	Hillary Clinton	Al Gore	Bill Clinton
Malcolm X	Stokely Carmichael	Martin Luther King	Gene McCarthy
Jane Fonda Hayden ('80s)	Jane Fonda Turner ('70s)	Eleanor Clift	Jane Fonda Vadim ('60s)
Kawame Ture	Sen. Paul Wellstone	Sen. Ted Kennedy	Sen. Tom Daschle
Catharine MacKinnon	Patricia Ireland	Donna Shalala	Geraldine Ferraro
Z Magazine	*The Nation*	*New York Times*	*The New Republic*
Covert Action	*Village Voice*	*Washington Post*	*WSJ* Feature Pages
Pacifica Radio	NPR	CNN	ABC, CBS, NBC
Homer's mother	Lisa Simpson	Mayor Quimby	Marge Simpson
Revolutionary Communist Party	Congressional Black Caucus	Democratic Party	Democratic Leadership Council
Greenpeace	Both NEAs	Urban Institute	Brookings Institution
Campus Organizing Committee	MacArthur Genius Awards	Ford Foundation	Carnegie Endowment
Verso	Most University Presses	99% of Book Publishers	The Free Press
Queer Studies	English Lit.	Political Science	Languages
Order of Ché	National Book Award	Pulitzer Prize	Humanitas Awards
Louis Farrakhan	Toni Morrison	Spike Lee	William Raspberry

RIGHT

MODERATE CONSERVATIVE	CONSERVATIVE	RIGHT	FAR RIGHT
Bob Dole	Ronald Reagan	Pat Buchanan	David Duke
Richard Nixon	John F. Kennedy	Barry Goldwater	George Wallace
Jane Fonda Fonda ('50s)	Bill Bennett	G. Gordon Liddy	Jared Taylor
President George Bush	Newt Gingrich	Gary Bauer	Lou Sheldon
Elizabeth Dole	Lynne Cheney	Phyllis Schlafly	Marge Schott
The Economist	*American Spectator*	*Human Events*	*Middle American News*
Readers' Digest	*WSJ* Editorial page	*Chronicles*	*American Renaissance*
Fox	*Firing Line*	Most talk radio	Radio Free Idaho
Homer Simpson	Bart Simpson	Ned Flanders	Sideshow Bob
American Reform Party	GOP	U.S. Taxpayers Party	Freemen
Hoover Institution	Heritage Foundation	Rockford Institute	John Birch Society
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or to explain masculine gender identity.

In the 1930's and '40's, we encountered violence in listening to the radio or watching movies, where cowboys and soldiers battled Indians and cops and robbers fought one another. But such aggression was far removed from our everyday lives. Now our children are exposed, at very tender ages, to murder in their neighborhoods, graphic television reports of violence, and extraordinary computer games in which one's adversary is blown away in milliseconds. Our current problems reflect our historic ambivalence about violence and violent actions, which, in the past, were contained by family, school, and religion. But the authority of these institutions has certainly eroded.

To suggest, as Miss Decter does, that the government is at fault for not requiring conscription is to elevate a procedure that was useful for only a short time in our historical journey; today, serving the greater good in an honorable and self-sacrificing manner has been achieved by many in volunteer service, such as the Peace Corps. The sense that war and armies supply an arena for male bonding and the testing of masculinity is a nostalgic yearning for the "good war" that is most unfortunate. Victorious armies almost always destroy and rape and leave a path of despair and destruction that no one, male or female, can be proud of.

The answers to the problems posed by our collective and individual development are unclear and will be slow in coming: after all, the evolution of our species has occurred over many more than three generations.

The struggle for the proper definition of gender roles will continue, whether we like it or not.

GARY N. COHEN, M.D.
Chief, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
SUNY-Buffalo,
Buffalo, New York

MIDGE DECTER writes:

Something I said certainly got Charles D. Koteen's goat. What precisely that was I must confess I am not quite clear about. He seems to wish to hold me responsible for the fact that he used to be remanded to the outfield. He was, of course, not alone out there: obviously there were many boys who were athletically less gifted than the stars of any team. So? The point about games, Mr. Koteen, is that they impose a standard, and the standard is one that has to be accepted by everyone who agrees to play. No one is after all *required* to take himself into that playground. Some boys who go there want to play the game because they excel at it, some go there because they actually want to test themselves, some go there in order not to be laggard. The system is tough, I will grant

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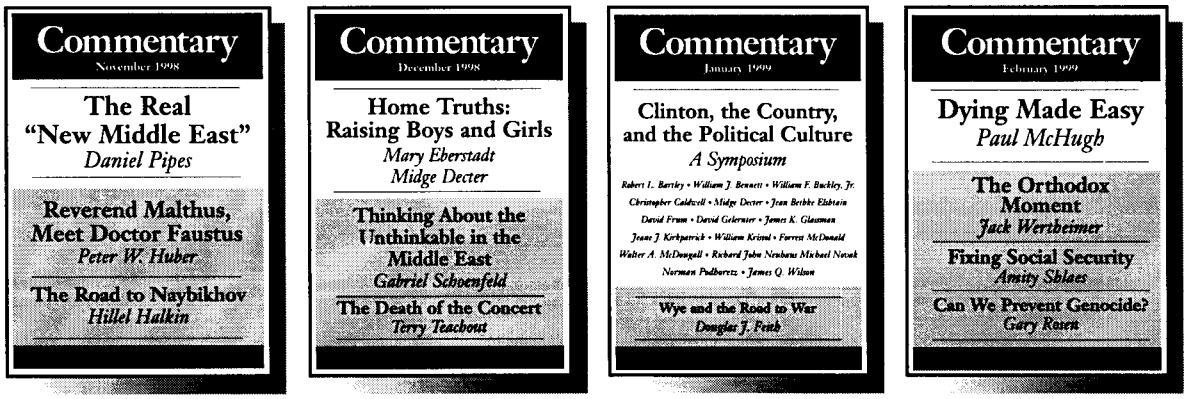

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you, but I did not invent it, after all: measuring themselves is something that boys have by one means or another always needed to do, and girls have not.

As for the rest, I will ignore Mr. Koteen's caricature of what I said about World War II and the country's attitude to it, and simply say that while it may be very difficult to hit a home run or win a Congressional Medal of Honor, it is not at all hard for a boy to sustain a sense of honor.

And finally, everybody with eyes in his head knows that girls do not play as boys do—beginning, let us say, at birth. They are very different kinds of people, and the effort to erase those differences has deeply impoverished the culture that surrounds us and has created a good deal of unnecessary personal misery for the members of both sexes, no matter how powerful or successful they turn out to be. Mr. Koteen himself seems to have fallen into considerable confusion on this score, for he seems to think that the case of his twenty-year-old daughter who may rule the world one day but in the meantime loves to watch *General Hospital* somehow represents a refutation of this point. Perhaps if he were to get clear in his mind just what has truly stirred him up so, he will discover that his argument is rightly with someone else entirely.

To Steven J. Ceresnie I would say that his, too, is a case of puzzlingly misdirected heat. I do indeed understand that attention-deficit disorder is a serious condition, which should precisely make everyone—Mr. Ceresnie above all—concerned to find that it is being diagnosed so promiscuously. Everybody knows that inexperienced or incompetent teachers do not like to teach little boys because they are so much more restless and hence so much harder to keep sitting in their chairs and working quietly than little girls. Once upon a time this meant that a little boy had a far higher likelihood of suffering scoldings, detentions, and trips to the principal's office than a little girl. Nowadays, with a higher percentage of both inexperienced and incompetent teachers in the schools—a situation intensified by the program called "special education," which, whatever its original purpose, has turned out to be a great educational boondoggle—millions of undisciplined little boys have in recent years been diagnosed as suffering from ADD and put on Ritalin. If Mr. Ceresnie wishes to assert the seriousness of ADD, he would do well to start with those colleagues of his who have been willing to turn the diagnosis into a mere convenience for keeping classroom order. The stereotypes, I am afraid, are on the other foot.

As for Allen Rutchik, he seems to feel even more resentfully than Mr. Ceresnie that I have slighted his profession, not only by questioning the accuracy of all those hasty diagnoses of ADD but also by saying that despite the usual professional explanations offered for all those schoolyard murders, they remain a social and spiritual mystery. I plead guilty. Perhaps if the mental-health experts took a little more time coming up with their diagnoses, and exhibited a little more humility in the face of evil, I would not be so quick to dismiss their contribution to an understanding of the mess we have got ourselves into.

And speaking of stereotypes, how about referring to an attempt to talk about the nature and needs of boys as advocating turning back the clock and having "an occasional war"? For shame.

I agree with Gary N. Cohen that we are currently living in a state of ambivalence, though I would think that the object of that state is not so much violence as the nature and source of moral authority. After all, there have been children who have lived through much worse and more immediate experiences of violence than little boys today—consider those who

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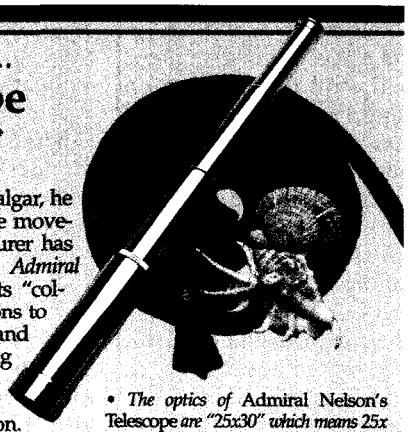

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witnessed the American Civil War, to name only one example—without feeling impelled to murder their classmates. It seems to me that Dr. Cohen's reliance on the idea that there is violence in the culture (and he is, of course, far from alone in this) begs the question in a big way, for what are all those graphic reports and television games and neighborhood murders doing there in the first place? This is a question we had better find the answer to one of these days or we will remain permanently in the soup.

Moreover, for Dr. Cohen to have read what I was saying about the army's manner of advertising for new recruits as "the government is at fault for not requiring conscription" and a symptom of nostalgia for the "good war" leaves me quite bewildered. I was talking about *manliness* and my belief that it is something boys will either have or go on longing to have and that currently is not all that much on offer. People can go on struggling for the "proper definition of gender roles" till the cows come home, but if they continue to deny boys and men what is in their nature (and in so doing, by the way, deny girls and women what is in theirs), they will continue to reap the whirlwind.

"The Road to Naybikhov"

TO THE EDITOR:

I greatly enjoyed the wonderful article by Hillel Halkin about his journey to the ex-evil empire ["The Road to Naybikhov," November 1998]. But it is a pity he did not mention a body of literature that is definitely as important an expression of the *shtetl* as the literature in Yiddish and Hebrew he does mention.

Russian-Jewish literature (i.e., Jewish literature in Russian) precedes chronologically both Hebrew and Yiddish writing (and printing) in the Russian empire, and from the very beginning it paid substantial attention to the life and habits of the *shtetl*. Of course, this attention was not very friendly. Quite the contrary: early Russian-Jewish authors were convinced (one could say, fanatically convinced) *maskilim*, or "enlighteners." Still, their work contains valuable information, and offers a kind of introduction to everyday Jewish existence. One example is *Memoirs of a Jew* by Grigory Bogrov, published in the early 1870's in St. Petersburg. But even some hardcore *maskilim* could find sympathetic words for the world of their fathers. There is, for instance, the wonderful *Story of Chaim-Shulim Feigis* (1865), the last work by the founding father of this literature, Osip Rabinovitch (1865).

My last example is a long short story by N. Naumov-Kogan, "In a Remote *Shtetl*" (1892). It appeared in one of the most prestigious Russian monthlies, and was met with enthusiasm by contemporary critics. One should also not forget that perhaps the best-known Russian-Jewish author, S. An-ski, wrote mostly in Russian and that the first version of his famous play, *The Dybbuk* (1916), was in that language.

An English-language anthology of this largely forgotten literature is, it seems to me, a prime desideratum, and something that might well appeal to American Jewish readers.

SHIMON MARKISH
Budapest, Hungary

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin's elegy for a lost community filled me with joy and tears. It is one of the most moving and unforgettable essays on the life of the *shtetl* I have ever read.

BARUCH COHEN
Canadian Institute for Jewish Research
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

HILLEL HALKIN writes:

I thank Shimon Markish and Baruch Cohen for their kind letters. Mr. Markish is certainly right about the desirability of an English-language anthology of "Jewish literature in Russian," a body of writing that is (with the exception of Isaac Babel) unknown outside of Russia. I happen to be a good case in point, having until now never heard of Grigory Bogrov, Osip Rabinovitch, or N. Naumov-Kogan. Mr. Markish's letter makes me realize that this is something to regret. Surely there must be a scholar, translator, and university press that can rectify this situation.

The Baltimore Case

TO THE EDITOR:

In "Science, Fraud & the Baltimore Case" [December 1998], Jeremy Bernstein writes, "Thanks to a new book by Daniel J. Kevles, *The Baltimore Case*, the matter can be put to rest. There was no fraud." Mr. Bernstein is referring, of course, to the alleged fudging of data by Thereza Imanishi-Kari while she worked on immune-system issues under the loose supervision of David Baltimore. In the very next sentence, Mr. Bernstein says he will discuss Kevles's book, but, oddly, he does no such thing. Not one iota of discussion. What he gives us instead is a résumé of the Imanishi-Kari incident. He concludes (perhaps because Kevles's book does) that the appeals board of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) "issued a ringing verdict of innocence for Imanishi-Kari and a resounding condemnation of the previous findings of the NIH. A ten-year ordeal was over." But we never do learn why the appeals board decided in favor of Imanishi-Kari and we have absolutely no idea whether Kevles did an independent investigation that caused him to believe the decision was proper.

True, Imanishi-Kari's ordeal is over, but nothing in Mr. Bernstein's article sheds light on whether the resolution of the matter was satisfactory. And what of Margot O'Toole, the biologist who had accused Imanishi-Kari of scientific fraud? What of her ordeal? Is she still reduced to menial work in a moving company? It would have been nice to have been told what happened to her.

SIDNEY GENDIN
Eastern Michigan University
Ypsilanti, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR:

The idea that science can police itself because it has a built-in checking mechanism is an old saw that is refuted by the long list of martyrs to science who suffered because of established dogma and personal interests and biases.

The immediate reaction

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of David Baltimore to Margot O'Toole's challenge was to stonewall the issue and be dismissive of the whistleblower. It was clear that his main interest was to protect not the integrity of science but his own reputation.

Jeremy Bernstein is correct to say that outright fraud is rare in science, but that may be too narrow for a realistic appraisal of the performance of scientists. This case turned on poor human judgment rather than deliberate falsification, self-protectiveness and arrogance rather than an intention to deceive. Those are the things that turn honest or stupid or incompetent blunders into potential disasters.

KEN WHELAN
San Francisco, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Perhaps my memory of the following incident will provide insight into Jeremy Bernstein's discussion of the Baltimore case.

In 1971, I was an associate professor at MIT. One morning I discovered that the neighboring office had been set afire. All the books and papers of the occupant, John Wulff, sixty-eight years old and professor emeritus, had been piled on his couch and burned. The identity of the nocturnal arsonists was clear: members of the Rosa Luxemburg faction of the Students for a Democratic Society, our dominant student radical organization, had previously invaded one of Professor Wulff's lectures and had subsequently threatened his life.

The most disturbing aspect of the time that immediately followed the incident was the utter silence on the part of the Boston news media and the MIT community. There was a general turning away, an aversion of the eyes and the mind, from this incident, a recapitulation, it seemed to me, of early Nazism. However, we did have one and only one visitor on that morning after, a young associate professor who expressed his sympathy and asked if there were anything at all he could do to help. Because he was the only one, I remember him well: David Baltimore.

ROBERT M. ROSE
Wenham, Massachusetts

The Concert Audience

TO THE EDITOR:

In "The Death of the Concert" [December 1998], Terry Teachout writes that we must have new music else the concert as we know it will die out. But is it truly "new music" that we need? The new composers may be more tonal (and, admittedly, more pleasing to the ear than before), and their works may please conductors and critics, but do they please the audience? Does the audience go away humming a new piece, wanting to recall it at some future time? A modern tonal piece cannot be hummed like a Brahms symphony. As with religion, making classical music "relevant" to the modern-day audience may sometimes do more harm than good.

I understand Mr. Teachout's concerns about the dwindling (and aging) concert audience, but I fear that emphasizing new music may ultimately turn off the very people who, if he is right, will be needed to guarantee the survival of the live classical concert.

DORON BECKER
Silver Spring, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR:

I doubt if orchestras are going to increase their attendance by performing more modern music, as Terry Teachout suggests. Unfortunately, the general public gets very little pleasure out of any music written since 1950 and, indeed, gets most of its enjoyment from music written before World War I. The new works are constantly being performed, but they do not endure. The public's attitude toward modern music contrasts vividly with its attitude toward the modern in the visual arts (Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Sigmar Polke) or

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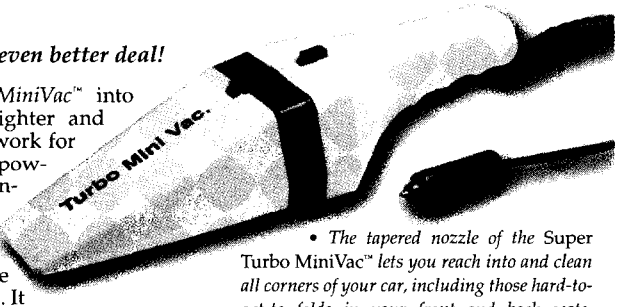

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dance (George Balanchine, Merce Cunningham, and William Forsythe) or even the theater (David Mamet, Tom Stoppard, and David Hare).

But perhaps Mr. Teachout is needlessly worried about orchestra attendance. Some fifteen years ago Lincoln Center surveyed its audiences and was alarmed at how they had aged so markedly since the 1950's. Still, today's box-office percentages remain about the same as they were when the audiences were younger.

ROBERT W. WILSON
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Beethoven was arguably the most innovative composer who ever lived. Yet within a few years, his compositions, including his difficult late quartets and sonatas, came to be loved by a large segment of the public. Why has 20th-century music not achieved this degree of popularity? There is a reason Mr. Teachout does not explore: maybe Beethoven is simply better.

If more modern music is not scheduled, Mr. Teachout believes that the children of today's concertgoers "will stay at home and listen to compact discs or whatever newer marvel is designed to replace them." A personal experience of mine suggests the opposite. I lived and taught in China in 1984 and again in 1989. The first time, many people were afraid to listen to Western music, which had been considered counterrevolutionary in the days of Chairman Mao and was still suspect. The second time, in 1989, Beethoven, Chopin, and even Berlioz were extremely popular among my college students, who were in the process of discovering classical music. Dissonant music, on the other hand, was greeted with scorn and expressions of disbelief: That cannot be real music! It is so ugly!

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ
College of Staten Island-CUNY
Staten Island, New York

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

I wonder what George Jochnowitz means when he criticizes "dissonant music." Surely he is not thinking of the music of Samuel Barber, Aaron Copland, Benjamin Britten, Francis Poulenc, Dmitri Shostakovich, Sir William Walton, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, all of whom wrote compositions after 1950—Robert W. Wilson's *annus horribilis*—that are scarcely more "dissonant" than *Tristan und Isolde*. If, on the other hand, he has in mind such nontonal composers as Milton Babbitt, Elliott Carter, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Pierre Boulez, then I am with him all the way—a point I thought I had made clear both in "The Death of the Concert" and in the other pieces about 20th-century music I have written for COMMENTARY in the past few years. Alas, I cannot be sure what Mr. Jochnowitz has in mind, for he fails to name any of the composers whose music so displeased his students. Did they really not like *any* music composed since World War I? Or are Mr. Jochnowitz and Mr. Wilson merely tilting at straw men of their own making?

I do not mean to be frivolous, for an important point is at issue here, and Mr. Wilson has put his finger on it: why should concertgoers be any more reluctant to listen to the music of Copland or Poulenc than museumgoers are reluctant to look at the paintings of Henri Matisse or Edward Hopper? Not to partake of the masterpieces of tonal modernism is willfully to cut oneself off from some of the most beautiful music ever written. This, I think, has been the main "achievement" of the musical avant-garde: it has alienated music-lovers from the true masterpieces of the 20th century through guilt by association.

I readily sympathize with Doron Becker and other readers who have questioned my enthusiastic response to the new tonalists. For most of my adult life I believed firmly—with good reason—that the great tradition of classical music had come to an end in the 60's, and would not be revived. As recently as a half-dozen years ago, I still thought it impossible that a new generation of American classical composers would choose to buck the powerful avant-garde establishment and return to tonality (just as it never occurred to me that the Soviet Union would collapse in my lifetime). Only time will tell whether these composers are writing masterpieces that will endure like the symphonies of Beethoven and Brahms, but I believe the best of them are writing *good* music, good enough to bring the electric excitement of the new back to our concert halls for the first time since the deaths of Britten and Shostakovich.

I might add that I, too, apply the "hummability" test to new music, and I invite Mr. Becker to apply that test to Lowell Liebermann's Piccolo Concerto, Op. 50, composed in 1996 and just released on the CD *James Galway Plays Lowell Liebermann* (RCA Victor Red Seal 09026-63235-2). Anyone who doubts that the music of the new tonalists is both serious and accessible should hasten to listen to the first movement of this piece.

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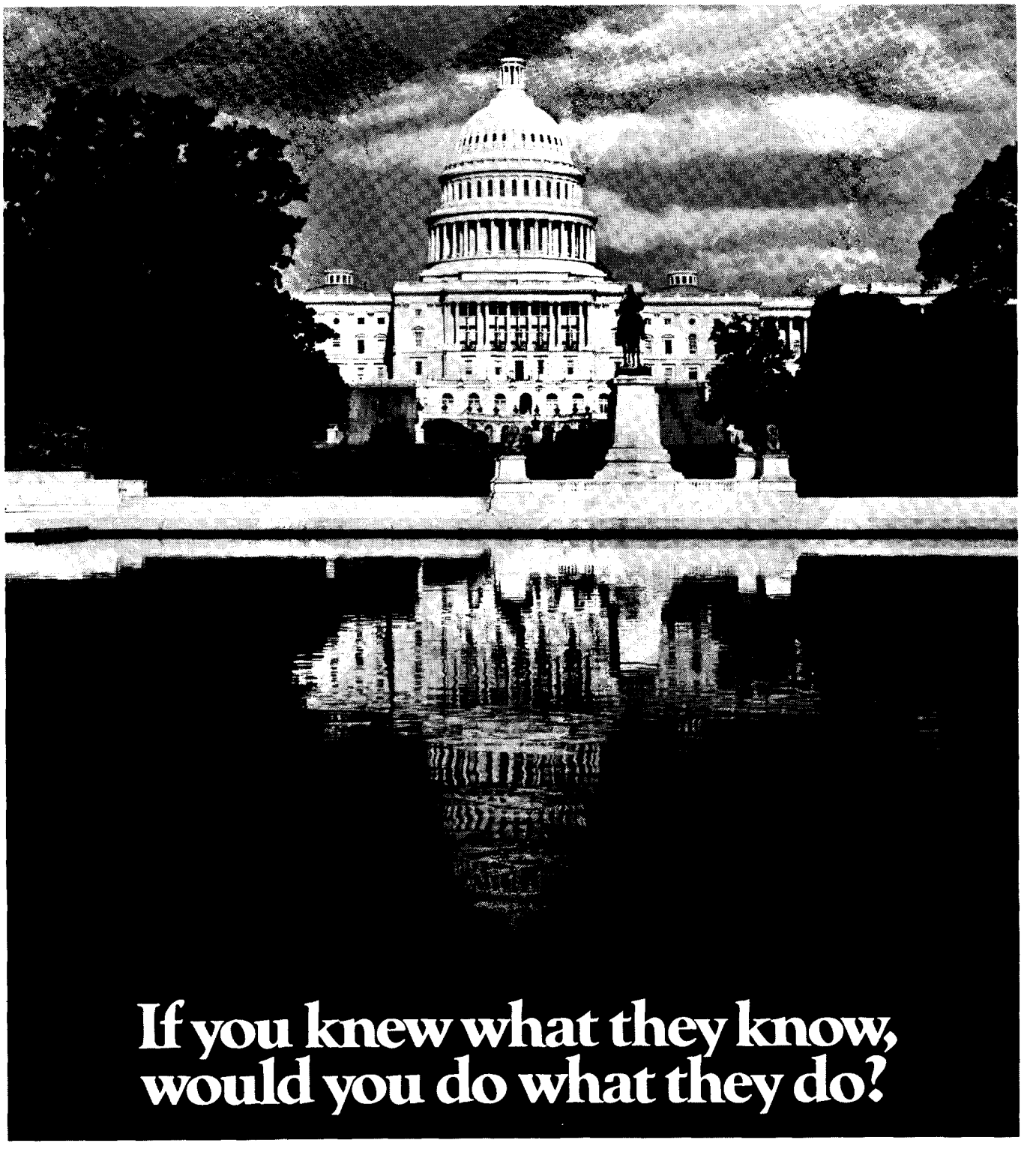

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Commentary
March 1999

Life, Liberty, Property

Richard Pipes

As THE 20th century draws to a close, the traditional threats to liberty no longer loom large. The downfall of Communism has eliminated the most direct and dangerous challenge, while the economic failures of socialism have discredited the notion that the abolition of private ownership in the means of production solves all social ills. Even though tyrannies still manage to hang on to power here and there, they are either isolated or else slowly yielding to the spirit of the times: the slogans of the day are democracy and privatization.*

Yet these welcome changes by no means signify that liberty's future is secure: it is still at peril, although from a different and novel source. The main threat to freedom today comes not from tyranny but from equality—equality defined as identity of reward. Related to it is the quest for security.

Liberty is by its nature inegalitarian, because living creatures differ in strength, intelligence, ambition, courage, perseverance, and all else that makes for success. Equality of opportunity and equality before the law—in the sense laid down to the Israelites through Moses in Leviticus 24:22: "Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger as for the home-born; for I am the Lord your God"—are not only compatible with liberty but essential to it. Equality of reward is not. Indeed, it is attainable only by coercion, which is why all utopian schemes presuppose despotic authority and all despots insist on the equality of their subjects. As Walter Bagehot observed over a century ago, "there is no method by which men can be both free and equal."

Ironically, the enforcement of equality destroys not only liberty but equality as well, for as the experience of Communism has demonstrated, those charged with implementing social equality claim for themselves privileges that elevate them high above the common herd. It also results in pervasive corruption, inasmuch as the elite that monopolizes goods and services—as must be done if those goods and services are to be equitably distributed—expects, in return for distributing them, rewards for itself.

And yet the ideal of a Golden Age when all were equal because there was no "mine and thine" has never ceased to appeal to humanity: it is one of our

RICHARD PIPES, *Baird research professor of history at Harvard, is the author of numerous works, including* Russia Under the Old Regime, The Unknown Lenin, *and* The Russian Revolution. *The present essay will appear in somewhat different form as the concluding chapter of his forthcoming book,* Property and Freedom, *which will be published by Knopf in May.*

* This holds true despite the fact that the ex-Communist countries which have recently adopted democracy and privatization, most notably Russia, are experiencing immense difficulties in adopting the Western model. It must be borne in mind that even the Communist parties of these countries no longer talk of a return to the Soviet model. They want to blend democracy and the market with social-welfare policies and a certain degree of government intervention in the economy—not an infeasible combination.

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persistent and seemingly indestructible myths. In the contest between equality and liberty, the former holds the stronger hand, because the loss of liberty is felt only when it occurs, whereas the pain of inequality rankles every moment of the day.

The trend of modern times appears to indicate that citizens of democracies are willing heedlessly to surrender their freedoms to purchase social equality (along with economic security), apparently oblivious of the consequences. And the consequences are that their ability to hold on to and use what they earn and own, to hire and fire at will, to enter freely into contracts, and even to speak their mind is steadily eroded by governments bent on redistributing private assets and subordinating individual rights to group rights. Despite the commendable reforms of recent years in the United States, the entire concept of the welfare state as it has evolved in the second half of the 20th century stands in tension with individual liberty, for it allows various groups with common needs to combine and claim the right to satisfy them at the expense of society at large, in the process steadily enhancing the power of the state that acts on their behalf.

This reality is currently masked by the immense wealth generated by the industrial economies operating on a global scale in time of peace. It could become painfully apparent, however, should the economic situation drastically deteriorate and the controls established by the state in time of prosperity enable it to restore social stability at the cost of freedom.

Returning the responsibilities for social assistance to the family or private charities, which shouldered them prior to the 20th century, would undoubtedly go a long way toward resolving this predicament. But such a radical solution is neither feasible nor desirable. The libertarian ideal of a society in which the government runs nothing is as unrealistic as the utopian ideal of one in which it runs everything. Even at the height of laissez-faire, government everywhere intervened in some measure in economic and social affairs: the notion of a passive state is as much a myth as that of primitive Communism.

This does not mean, however, that it is impossible to find a sensible alternative to the two extreme positions. In dealing with the scope of state power, the question is not either/or—either none or all-embracing—but more or less. When, in the 19th century, the Supreme Court found it necessary to intervene in private contractual engagements—and it did so with great reluctance—the interference was often accompanied by the cautionary adjective "reasonable." Today, although the state must regulate more than ever, such caution is correspondingly more necessary than ever. It must be remembered that the economic rights of citizens (rights to property) are as essential as their civil rights (rights to equal treatment), and that, indeed, the two are inseparable.

ALTHOUGH THE concept of human nature has fallen into disfavor, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that there do indeed exist certain constants in human behavior. One of these constants, impervious to legislative and pedagogic manipulation, is acquisitiveness.

In and of itself, the desire to possess manifests greed no more than the appetite for food manifests gluttony, or love lechery. Acquisitiveness is common to all living things, being universal among animals and children as well as adults at every level of civilization. On the most elementary level, it is an expression of the instinct of survival. But beyond this, it constitutes a basic trait of the human personality, for which achievements and acquisitions are means of self-fulfillment. And since fulfillment of the self is the essence of liberty, liberty cannot flourish when property and the inequality to which it gives rise are forcibly eliminated.

In addition to being the most important of liberties, acquiring property is the universal engine of prosperity. The close relationship between property and prosperity is demonstrated by the course of history. Although property in personal belongings is well-nigh universal and known since the dawn of humanity, the ownership of agricultural land—the principal source of livelihood until very modern times—originated in ancient Greece and Rome, and since the Middle Ages spread to the rest of Europe and regions populated by Europeans. One of the main reasons for the rise of the West to its position of global economic preeminence lies in this institution of property, which in much of the rest of the world has led and still leads a rather precarious existence.

The indispensability of property for prosperity can be demonstrated empirically for the contemporary world. The results are impressive in their consistency. Countries that provide the firmest guarantees of economic independence, including private property rights, are virtually without exception the richest. They also enjoy the best civil services and judicial institutions. Today this holds true not only for countries populated by Europeans but also for Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Chile,

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and Taiwan. Conversely, countries that rate lowest in terms of property rights and market freedom—Cuba, Somalia, and North Korea, for instance—languish at the bottom of the scale.

THE RELATIONSHIP of property to freedom is more complex, because unlike prosperity, "freedom" has more than one meaning. Thus it is possible to enjoy firm property (economic) rights without political rights, that is, the right to vote. In Western Europe, property rights were respected long before citizens were granted the franchise. Today, some of the most prosperous countries (Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan) with the firmest guarantees of property are run in an authoritarian fashion.

It is a serious mistake, unfortunately often committed by the U.S. government in its foreign dealings, to define freedom to mean exclusively democracy, for ordinary citizens may enjoy a wide range of economic and legal freedoms along with personal rights without being able to choose their government. The mistake is probably due to the fact that Americans, as heirs and beneficiaries of English constitutional development, take such freedoms and rights so much for granted that they identify freedom with representative government. The historical evidence indicates that property can coexist with arbitrary and even oppressive political power. Democracy, however, cannot do without it.

The symbiotic relationship between property and freedom does not preclude the state from imposing reasonable restraints on the uses made of objects owned, or ensuring the basic living standards of the neediest strata of the population. Clearly, one cannot allow property rights to serve as a license for ravaging the environment or ignoring the fundamental needs of the unemployed, sick, and aged. Hardly anyone contests this proposition today: even Friedrich Hayek, an implacable foe of state intervention in the economy, agreed that the state has the duty to ensure for all citizens "a minimum of food, shelter, and clothing, sufficient to preserve health and the capacity to work."

But to say this is not to grant the state the authority to use the powers at its disposal to interfere with the freedom of contract, to redistribute wealth on a large scale, or to compel one part of the population to bear the costs of the government-defined "rights" of special constituencies. This is precisely the situation we now face, in particular in the form of limitations on the use of property imposed by various environmental or zoning laws and regulations.

Such limitations should surely be interpreted as "takings" under the Fifth Amendment and adequately compensated. Unfortunately, as the political scientist William Riker has written, this runs counter to the entrenched attitude of the highest organs of the judiciary, which since the late 1930's have assumed "that civil rights and property rights can be sharply distinguished, and that civil rights . . . merit greater judicial protection than property rights."* Yet only by a redress of the balance—through court decisions and de-regulatory rulings of the government—can the rights of ownership be restored to their proper place in the scale of values instead of being sacrificed to the unattainable ideal of social equality and all-embracing economic security.

Not only do "civil" and "property" rights need to be balanced if we care about freedom, but the whole concept of civil rights requires reexamination. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 gave the government no license to set quotas for hiring personnel in private enterprise or for admitting students to institutions of higher learning; and yet for decades the federal bureaucracy has acted as if it had. Even less did the Act authorize interference with freedom of speech in the workplace in matters of so-called "sexual harassment." But even as property rights have been steadily narrowed in application, the category of "civil rights" has been broadened to include the claims of any group—women, minorities, the disabled, and so forth—to goods and services that fellow citizens must pay for either by sacrificing some of their own rights or else by footing the bill.

The plain truth is that the so-called "social rights" of today, having been bestowed by legislative fiat, are not "rights" in any meaningful sense and certainly not "entitlements," since no one is entitled to anything at someone else's expense; they are, rather, claims on society that it may or may not grant. Nevertheless, in the name of such spurious rights, a large number of citizens in modern industrial democracies are now required to work for the support of others.

In Sweden, the most retrograde state in this respect, for each citizen who earns his own living, 1.8 other citizens are fully or partially maintained by taxes that he is required to pay; in Germany and Great Britain, the ratio is 1:1, and in the U.S., 1:0.76. Because the population dependent on the state includes a heavy proportion of the elderly while the

* The fictitious contrast between the "rights of property" and the "rights of men" was drawn as early as 1910 by Theodore Roosevelt and restated by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1936. See Tom Bethell, *The Noblest Triumph*, which I reviewed in the November 1998 COMMENTARY.

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taxpayers are younger wage and salary earners, an unhealthy generational conflict may well develop in welfare societies as the population ages. We see glimmerings of such a conflict in the current dispute in this country over Social Security.

UNLESS THE greatest care is exercised in protecting the rights to property, we may well end up with a regime that, without being tyrannical in the customary sense of the word, is nevertheless unfree. The framers of the American Constitution did not anticipate this possibility: in the words of the 20th-century jurist Roscoe Pound, "They intended to protect the people against their rulers, not themselves." But, as it has turned out, under conditions of modern, welfare-oriented democracy, the threat to liberty can also emanate from one's fellow citizens, who, increasingly dependent on government largesse, often care more about their personal security than about general freedom.

"Experience," wrote Justice Brandeis,

> should teach us to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the government's purposes are *beneficent*. Men born to freedom are naturally alert to repel invasion of their liberty by evil-minded rulers. The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachments by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding.

The reason for this is that despotism appears in two distinct guises. There is the arbitrary rule of absolutist monarchs or dictators, elected by no one and subject neither to constitutional nor parliamentary restraints. And there is the tyranny in democratic societies of one part of the population over another: that of the majority over the minority but also—where elections are won with pluralities—of minorities over the majority.

Czarist Russia in its classical guise provided an extreme example of traditional despotism. There, the authorities could detain, imprison, or exile any subject without due process; they could confiscate his properties; they legislated as they saw fit. And yet, in practice, the average Russian under the old regime had scarcely any contact with the government and felt little interference from it, because the scope of government activity was very narrow, being largely confined to the collection of taxes, the drafting of recruits, and the preservation of the established order.

Today, the scope of government activity is immeasurably broader, and not only in authoritarian regimes but in a democracy like our own. Our government is elected, to be sure, but its interference in the life of citizens is greater than it has ever been. This is true at every level, from the federal down to that of the states and localities; in the latter, indeed, the recent expansion of government, partly under the aegis of "devolution," has reached striking proportions.

As Hayek pointed out, the broadening of the scope of government, in and of itself, carries seeds of a despotism at least as invidious as the traditional kind. Hayek's main concern was with protecting liberty from the seemingly unstoppable trend in Western democracies to subject the national economy to planning, which, he felt, would inevitably lead to tyranny. His fears in this respect proved unfounded. But his observations on the dangers implicit in the extension of the government's reach retain their validity:

> [T]he probability of agreement of a substantial portion of the population upon a particular course of action decreases as the scope of state activity expands. . . . Democratic government worked successfully so long as, by a widely accepted creed, the functions of the state were limited to fields where real agreement among a majority could be achieved. The price we have to pay for a democratic system is the restriction of state action to those fields where agreement can be obtained; and it is the great merit of a liberal society that it reduces the necessity of agreement to a minimum compatible with the diversity of opinions which in a free society will exist.

This reasoning explains why government interference in the life of the citizenry even for benevolent purposes endangers liberty: it posits a consensus that does not exist and hence requires coercion.

But well-meaning patriarchalism also enervates people by robbing them of the entrepreneurial spirit implicit in freedom. What harm long-term dependence on the welfare state can inflict became apparent after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when a substantial part of the population, suddenly deprived of comprehensive state support and unaccustomed to fending for itself, came to yearn for the restoration of the despotic yoke.

To be sure, Soviet Communism represented the most determined effort ever undertaken to condition people's thoughts and behavior, and nothing remotely like it is on the horizon in today's United States. Moreover, one can even point to a number of hopeful countervailing trends here, including recent decisions of the Supreme Court favoring property

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owners in their disputes with local authorities, the reform of welfare, and limitations on racial preferences in employment and higher education.

Nevertheless, for a variety of reasons, including the fact that our schools fail to teach history, the vast majority of today's citizens have no inkling to what they owe their liberty and prosperity—namely, a long and successful struggle for rights of which the right to property is the most fundamental. They are therefore unaware of what debilitating effect the restrictions on property rights will, over the long run, have on their lives.

The aristocrat Tocqueville, observing the democratic United States and his native bourgeois France a century and a half ago, had a premonition that the modern world faced dangers to liberty previously unknown. "I have no fear that they will meet with tyrants in their rulers," he wrote of future generations, "but rather with guardians." Such "guardians" would deprive people of liberty by gratifying their desires and would then exploit their dependence on such generosity. He foresaw a kind of democratic despotism in which "an innumerable multitude of men, all equal and alike," would incessantly strive to pursue "the petty and paltry pleasures with which they glut their lives." Hovering over them would be the benign paternalistic government—the modern welfare state:

> For their happiness such a government willingly labors, but it chooses to be the sole and only arbiter of that happiness; it provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, regulates the descent of property, and subdivides their inheritances: what remains, but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?

Is this what we want?

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The Rights of History and the Rights of Imagination

Cynthia Ozick

It was not through words that the world first took in the nature and degree of the atrocities wreaked upon Jews by Germans a half-century ago. You could not read of the last and worst of these atrocities in the newspaper of record, which suppressed reports of such events even as they were occurring, but certain early depredations you could glimpse, fleetingly, in the newsreels: the crowns of fire and smoke bursting through the roofs of burning synagogues on the night of November 9, 1938, the pyres of burning books in the city squares, the genial faces of young men as they hurled intellect into the flames. Sitting peacefully in an American movie house, you could see all these things with your own eyes, and—through film's illusion of simultaneity—you can see these same scenes today.

The burning synagogues and the burning books are what are currently termed icons—incarnations of a time when, nearly all over Europe, Jews were becoming defenseless human prey. Other images are equally indelible: the photo of the terror-stricken little boy with his cap askew and his hands in the air (impossible not to absorb those desperate eyes, those small elbows, that civilized cap, without belief in the true existence of absolute evil); and, at war's end, the hellish frames of a British bulldozer shoveling a hill of skeletal human corpses into a ditch. In the film the bulldozer blunders forward and shovels, backs up, repositions itself and shovels again. The camera will admit us to these horrors as often as we dare to revisit them. And we must suppose that some of these images, through repetition, have become so recognizable, so clichéd, that the most liberal hearts can be hardened against them. I recall a private letter from a celebrated novelist: "These old events," he wrote, "can rake you over only so much, and then you long for a bit of satire on it all." Satire?

There is another image less well-known than the fires and the boy and the bulldozer; it is more overtly brutish by virtue of its being less overtly brutish. And if satire means a parody of normality, then perhaps this scene is travesty enough to gratify the most jaded observer. A city street, modern and clean, lined with leafy bushes and arching trees, on a fine bright autumn day. The road has been cleared of cars to make room for a parade. The marchers are all men, fathers and breadwinners, middle-class burghers wearing the long overcoats and gray fedoras of the 30's; they appear gentlemanly but somber. Along the parade route, behind mild barriers, a cheerful citizenry watches, looking as respectable as the marchers themselves, all nicely dressed, men and women and children, but mostly women and children—these are, let us note,

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business hours, when fathers and breadwinners are ordinarily in their offices. The weather is lovely, the crowds are pleasant, the women are laughing, the marchers are grave; here and there you will notice a child darting past the barriers, on a dare. The marchers are Jews being taken away in a scheme preparatory for their destruction; they are being escorted by soldiers with guns. Perhaps the watchers do not yet know the destiny of the marchers; but what a diversion it is, what a holiday, to see these dignified gentlemen humiliated, like clowns on show, by the power of the gun!

We may tremble before these images, but we are morally obliged to the German lens that inscribed them. The German lens recorded truthfully; its images are stable and trustworthy: the camera and the act are irrevocably twinned. Though photography can be kin to forgery (consider only the egregious slantedness of so many contemporary "documentaries"), at that time the camera did not lie. It yielded—and preserved—an account of ineffaceable clarity and immutable integrity. And later, when the words disclosing those acts of oppression first began to arrive, we knew them to be as stable and as trustworthy as the camera's images. The scrupulous voice of Elie Wiesel; the scrupulous voice of Primo Levi; the stumbling voices of witnesses who have no fame and have no voice, yet whose eloquence rises up through the scars and stammerings of remembered suffering. The voices of Christian conscience and remorse. All these words were consequential in a way the pictures were not. The pictures belonged to their instant; though they could serve memory, they were not the same as memory. You could not quarrel with the pictures. You could not change what they insistently and irremediably saw. But as the words rushed in in torrents, as they proliferated, becoming more and more various and removed, some broke through the gates of memory into the freer fields of parable, myth, analogy, symbol, story. And where memory was fastidious in honoring history, story turned to the other muses. Where memory was strict, fiction could be lenient, and sometimes lax. Where memory struggled for stringency of historical precision, fiction drifted toward history as a thing to be used, as imagination's stimulus and provocation.

And just here is the crux: the aims of imagination are not the aims of history. Scholars are nowadays calling historiography into radical question; history is seen as the historian's clay; omniscience is suspect, objectivity is suspect, the old-fashioned claims of historical truthfulness are suspect; the causes of the Peloponnesian war are sometimes what I say they are, and sometimes what you say they are. But even under the broken umbrella of contemporary relativism, history has not yet been metamorphosed into fable. Scholars may not agree on what happened, but they do consent to an actual happening. Your Napoleon may not be my Napoleon, but the fact of Napoleon is incontrovertible. To whatever degree, history is that which is owed to reality.

Imagination—fiction—is freer than that; is freed altogether. Fiction has license to do anything it pleases. Fiction is liberty at its purest. It can, if it likes—in the manner of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, or Mel Brooks in the French Revolution—place Napoleon in command of the armies of Sparta. It can alter history; it can invent a history that never was, as long as it maintains a hint of verisimilitude. A fictional character represents only itself. You may be acquainted with someone "like" Emma Bovary or "like" Anna Karenina, but if you want the true and only Bovary, you must look to Flaubert, and if you want the true and only Karenina, you must look to Tolstoy. Bovary is not a stand-in for French women; she is Flaubert's invention. Karenina is not a stand-in for Russian women; she is Tolstoy's invention. Imagination owes nothing to what we call reality; it owes nothing to history. The phrase "historical novel" is mainly an oxymoron. History is rooted in document and archive. History is what we make out of memory. Fiction flees libraries and loves lies.

The rights of fiction are not the rights of history. On what basis, then, can I disdain a story that subverts document and archive? On what basis can I protest a novel that falsifies memory? If fiction annihilates fact, that is the imagination's prerogative. If fiction evades plausibility, that too is the imagination's prerogative. And if memory is passionate in its adherence to history, why should that impinge on the rights of fiction? Why should the make-believe people in novels be obliged to concur with history, or to confirm it? Characters in fiction are not illustrations or representations. They are freely imagined fabrications; they have nothing to do with the living or the dead; they go their own way.

And there the matter ends; or should. Nothing is at issue. But there are, admittedly, certain difficulties. Embedded in the idea of fiction is impersonation: every novelist enters the personae of his characters; fiction-writing is make-believe, acting

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a part, assuming an identity not one's own. Novelists are, after all, professional impostors; they become the people they invent. When the imposture remains within the confines of a book, we call it art. But when impersonation escapes the bounds of fiction and invades life, we call it hoax—or, sometimes, fraud. Three recent exemplars have captured public attention; all have provoked argument and controversy.

In 1995, Alan Dershowitz, famed equally for his contribution to the legal defense of O.J. Simpson and for his authorship of books of Jewish self-consciousness, published a review of *The Hand That Signed the Papers*, an Australian novel on a Ukrainian theme. Dershowitz took issue with both plot and substance, and accused the twenty-four-year-old writer, Helen Demidenko, of "the most primitive manifestations of classic Ukrainian anti-Semitism: all Jews are Communists, cheats, smelly animals, and otherwise subhuman." According to Dershowitz's summary of the novel, when the Soviet commissars—all Jews—arrive in Ukraine in the 1930's, they burn down a house with a family inside; understandably, the surviving child becomes the so-called Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka. "A Jewess from Leningrad," Dershowitz continues, "refuses to treat a sick Ukrainian baby, declaring 'I am a physician, not a veterinarian.'" Demidenko's "subtle goal," he concludes, is "to explain the Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust so that the murders go unpunished," and her "greatest anger is directed against the Jewish survivors who sought to bring their Ukrainian tormentors to justice."

Soon after the appearance of Dershowitz's review, the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organizations threatened to bring a legal action against him under Australia's racial-vilification law. Dershowitz responded by welcoming a lawsuit as "an excellent forum for reminding the world of the complicity of so many Ukrainians in the Nazi Holocaust." That the dispute concerned a work of fiction appeared to vanish in the legal and political tumult. Meanwhile, however, the novel rose to fourth on Australia's best-seller list, and received the country's most prestigious literary prize, the Miles Franklin Award. The judges praised Demidenko for illuminating "a hitherto unspeakable portion of the Australian migrant experience." Demidenko herself insisted that her story was based on her own family's travail.

As it turned out, all parties were duped: the protesting reviewer, the infuriated Ukrainians, the publisher, the prize-givers. Helen Demidenko was in reality Helen Darville, a daughter of British immigrants pretending to be Ukrainian in order to augment her credibility. Allen & Unwin, Darville's publisher, confirmed that the novelist "had made some stupid mistakes," but argued that "we still have a book of great power, a book daring to deal with awesome topics." Dershowitz's objections went largely unaddressed. But after the exposure of Demidenko as Darville, the threat of a lawsuit was quietly withdrawn.

A MORE ambiguous instance of novelistic impersonation occurred in Ecuador, where Salomon Isacovici, a Romanian-born survivor of the camps, set out to tell his experiences under the German terror. He enlisted the help—and the Spanish-language facility—of Juan Manuel Rodriguez, a former Jesuit priest; it is not clear whether Rodriguez was amanuensis, ghost, or co-author. In 1990, the manuscript, entitled *Man of Ashes*, was published in Mexico under both names and promoted as "cruel and truthful testimony of the Nazi concentration camps." Mexico's Jewish community praised it as a genuine work of witness and awarded it a prize. Isacovici died early in 1998, but three years before, he had announced in a letter that he was "the legitimate author," that *Man of Ashes* was his autobiography, and that Rodriguez was hired only to assist with "the literary and structural parts of the book." Reporting in the *Forward*, Ilan Stavans, a writer and editor educated in Mexico, quotes Rodriguez as claiming that he "wrote the entire book, its title included, in six months, based upon [Isacovici's] manuscript and mutual conversations."

Rodriguez continues to insist that *Man of Ashes* is not Isacovici's memoir, but is, rather, the product of his own literary imagination. "I transposed many of my philosophical views to Salomon," he told Stavans. "My philosophical formation helped achieve the transplant and succeeded in turning the book from a simple account to a novel of ideas." The University of Nebraska Press plans to issue the book in English as Isacovici's memoir, with Rodriguez named as co-author, and Rodriguez is considering a suit. "Salomon is my novel's protagonist, I am his author," he states. "I invented passages and details, and afterward he believed he had lived through them. For him the book is autobiography; for me it is a charming novel." Quite aside from "charming" as a description of Holocaust suffering, how may we regard what appears to be an act of usurpation? When Rodriguez declares a narrative of survival to be fiction, is the Holocaust being denied? Or is it being affirmed in terms of art?

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The same query, steeped in similar murk, can be put to the extraordinary history of *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood*, published as the memoir of Binjamin Wilkomirski, a self-declared Latvian Jew. The book, brought out by Germany's Suhrkamp Verlag in 1995, and last year by Schocken Books in New York,* purports to be the therapy-induced recovered memory of a boy, born in Riga, who was deported at the age of three to Maidanek, a camp in Poland. Lauded as a literary masterpiece, *Fragments* won the *Prix Mémoire de la Shoah* in France, a *Jewish Quarterly* literary prize in Britain, and a National Jewish Book Award in the United States. It has been endorsed by the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, translated into more than a dozen languages, and eloquently blurbed by established writers. Its success lent credence to the theory that profoundly repressed memory, even of events very early in life, can be retrieved; and it also offered, in a child's pure voice, a narrative of German oppression to set beside the classic accounts of Elie Wiesel and Anne Frank.

All this began to disintegrate when Daniel Ganzfried, a Swiss writer and the son of a Holocaust survivor, undertook to verify Wilkomirski's assertions. He found, instead, inconsistencies of dates and facts, as well as documents identifying Wilkomirski as the child, born in Switzerland in 1941, of an unwed Swiss Protestant woman named Yvonne Grosjean. He also uncovered legal papers proving Wilkomirski's adoption by a middle-class Zurich family. These disclosures have caused uneasiness among Wilkomirski's several publishers, but so far none has been willing—at least publicly—to call him a fraud. Holocaust historians note that no child younger than seven would have been spared instant gassing—demurrals that were, however, not voiced during the period of rhapsodic prize-giving. Wilkomirski—or, rather, Bruno Doesseker, as he was known before his imposture—is in seclusion, complaining of illness, and Ganzfried, apparently, is reluctant to display the records he gathered.

One claim in Wilkomirski's defense (reminiscent of Rodriguez's charge against Isacovici) is that he is no fraud, and that there can be no hoax, because he believes in his written story, and takes it to be his own. Perhaps he does. In that event we might wish to dub him insane. Even so, his conviction, if conviction it is, has done harm: it led a survivor living in Israel to suppose that he had recovered his lost son, whom he had thought long dead. In the meantime, though, Wilkomirski's publishers, and Wilkomirski himself, have not dared to suggest that *Fragments* might indeed be a work of the imagination. The conflict between the freedom to invent and an honest confrontation with the constraints of the historical record remains muddled—and, often enough, muddied. If the subject were, say, the Homeric wars, the muddle might be benign, even frolicsome, a simulacrum of trickster literature. But the subject is the Holocaust, and the issue is probable fraud, hoax, or delusion. What is permissible to the playfully ingenious author of *Robinson Crusoe*—fiction masking as chronicle—is not permitted to those who touch on the destruction of six million souls, and on the extirpation of their millennial civilization in Europe.

Yet the question of the uses of the imagination does not and cannot stop even here. Beyond the acrobatics of impersonation, or the nervy fakery of usurpation, lies a sacred zone consecrated to the power of art: or call it, more modestly, literature's elastic license. I have in mind two novels, *Sophie's Choice*, by William Styron, and *The Reader*, by Bernhard Schlink—one first brought out in 1979, the other published only last year; one long acclaimed, the work of a contemporary American literary master, the other by a highly praised German writer. Both novels clearly intend to attach their stories to the actuality of the death camps.

Sophie's Choice followed by a dozen years Styron's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Confessions of Nat Turner*, and, like the latter, became a celebrated best-seller. It was soon a staple of Jewish book groups, whose interest was alerted by those portions of the novel which approached Auschwitz. But it was also a richly literary *Bildungsroman*—the often charming story of Stingo, an untried young Southern writer whose attraction to New York lands him in Brooklyn, "the Kingdom of the Jews." In Mrs. Yetta Zimmerman's rooming house Stingo meets Nathan Landau and his lover, a beautiful Polish woman named Sophie. Nathan is Jewish and mad—a paranoid schizophrenic, erratic when lucid, brutal and suicidal otherwise. Sophie is tormented by a horrific past, which she discloses to Stingo, piecemeal, as the two halves of the novel, Brooklyn and Auschwitz, begin to converge. And it is on account of Sophie's Auschwitz tribulations that *Sophie's Choice* has had an enduring reputation as a "Holocaust novel."

There is some justification for this claim, at least for the well-researched historical sections dealing with the Final Solution in Poland. Primo Levi, in *The Drowned and the Saved*, affirms that 90 to 95 percent of the victims of Auschwitz were Jews, and

* Translated by Carol Brown Janeway, 155 pp., $20.00.

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Styron's factual passages do not depart from this observation. His information concerning Polish Christians in Auschwitz is far thinner; it is, in fact, nearly absent. He gives us Sophie herself, but fails to surround her with the kind of documentation that he supplies for the deportation of Jews—exact dates of arrival in Auschwitz, for instance, as when he recounts the gassing of a contingent of Greek Jews, or when he enumerates figures for the Jewish population of Warsaw before 1939, or when he notes that the "resettlement" from the Warsaw Ghetto took place in July and August of 1942. Wherever the fingerprint of Styron's Holocaust research appears—and it appears frequently and accurately—it points to Jews.

When he turns to Polish Christians, he apprises us of the Nazis' *Lebensborn* project, which sent "Aryan"-looking Polish children to be reared as Germans in Germany; of the Polish resistance movements, many of them zealously anti-Semitic—though the two resistance workers featured in the novel are passionately concerned for Jews; of a boxcar filled with the corpses of Polish children rejected for *Lebensborn*; and of the rescinded plan to tattoo Polish Christian prisoners. Sophie's father and husband are depicted as serious Jew-haters. For the 75,000 Polish Christians murdered in Auschwitz, Styron's novel provides no data, no detail; or, rather, Sophie alone is the detail. Seventy-five thousand Polish Christians *were* murdered in Auschwitz, and that is fact enough. Incontrovertibly, the factory of inhumanity that was Auschwitz produced complete equality of unsurpassed human suffering. Nor may suffering be measured in numbers, or by majorities, or by percentages. But if Styron's Auschwitz research leads voluminously to Jews, it is because the murdered Jews voluminously outnumbered the murdered Polish Christians.

What does it signify—does it signify at all—that the author of *Sophie's Choice* chooses as his protagonist an inmate of Auschwitz who is a Polish Catholic? Here is a fictional decision that by no means contradicts a historical reality. It is the truth—but is it the whole truth, the representative truth? And again, under the rules of fiction, why must a writer's character be representative of a statistical norm? Under the rules of fiction, if Bovary is not typical of most French women, and if Karenina is not typical of most Russian women, why should William Styron's Sophie be representative of the preponderant female population of Auschwitz? What does the autonomy of the imagination owe to a demographic datum? Or ask instead, what does individual suffering owe to the norm? Will the identity of the norm dare to compromise or diminish or denigrate one woman's anguish?

COME NOW to Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader*,* a novel by a practicing judge, a professor of law at the University of Berlin, and recently a visiting professor at Touro Law School, a Jewish-sponsored institution in New York. This work, too, is an admired favorite among Jewish readers. Its narrator is a law student who is presented as a self-conscious member of the "second generation"—the children of those who were responsible for the Nazi regime. The narrative begins postwar, when an intellectual teen-age boy, the future law student, strikes up an unexpected friendship with a streetcar conductor, a woman markedly older than himself. The disparate friends rapidly become lovers, and their affair takes on an unusual routine of added romantic pleasure: in scenes tender and picturesque, as in a Dutch interior, the boy reads aloud to the woman. Only many years later—the occasion is a war crimes' trial—is the woman revealed as an illiterate. And as something else besides: she is a former SS guard in a camp dedicated to the murder of Jews. An unsuspecting youth in the arms of an unconfessed female Nazi: over this retrospective image falls, unavoidably, the shadow of what some call Nazi porn.

Contemplating the predicament of young Germans after their nation's defeat, the narrator asks, "What should our second generation have done, what should it do with the knowledge of the horrors of the extermination of the Jews? . . . Should we only fall silent in revulsion, shame, and guilt?" "Our parents," he explains,

> had played a variety of roles in the Third Reich. Several among our fathers had been in the war, two or three of them as officers of the Wehrmacht and one as an officer of the Waffen SS. Some of them had held positions in the judiciary or local government. Our parents also included teachers and doctors, and . . . a high official in the Ministry of the Interior.

In short, an educated generation. To the narrator's observations, let us add Goebbels, a novelist and playwright, Speer, an accomplished architect, and perhaps also Goering, an art collector with a taste for masterpieces. None of this can surprise. Germany before World War II was known to have the most educated population in Europe, with the highest standard of literacy. Yet the plot of Schlink's narrative turns not on the literacy that was overwhelmingly

* Translated by Carol Brown Janeway. Pantheon, 160 pp., $21.00.

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typical of Germany, but rather on an anomalous case of illiteracy, which the novel itself recognizes as freakish.

And this freakishness is Schlink's premise and his novel's engine: an unlettered woman who, because she could not read a paper offering her a job in a factory, passed up the chance and was sent instead to serve in a brutal camp. After the war, when she is brought to trial, the narrator acknowledges that she is guilty of despicable crimes—but he also believes that her illiteracy must mitigate her guilt. Had she been able to read, she would have been a factory worker, not an agent of murder. Her crimes are illiteracy's accident. Illiteracy is her exculpation.

Again the fictive imagination presses its question: is the novelist obligated to represent typicality? If virtually universal literacy was the German reality, how can a novel, under the rules of fiction, be faulted for choosing what is atypical? The novelist is neither sociologist, nor journalist, nor demographer, nor reality-imitator; and never mind that the grotesquely atypical turns out to be, in this work by a member of the shamed and remorseful second generation, a means of exculpation. Characters come as they will, in whatever form, one by one; and the rights of imagination are not the rights of history. A work of fiction, by definition, cannot betray history. Nor must a novel be expected to perform like a camera.

If there is any answer at all to this argument (and the argument has force), it must lie in the novelist's intention. Intention is almost always a private, or perhaps a secret, affair, and we may never have access to it. Besides, the writer's motivation does not always reveal itself even to the writer. It would seem, though, that when a novel comes to us with the claim that it is directed consciously toward history, that the divide between history and the imagination is being purposefully bridged, that the bridging is the very point, and that the design of the novel is to put human flesh on historical notation, then the argument for fictional autonomy collapses, and the rights of history can begin to urge their own force. The investigation of motive is history's task, and here a suspicion emerges: that Sophie in Styron's novel was not conceived as a free fictional happenstance, but as an inscribed symbolic figure, perhaps intended to displace a more commonly perceived symbolic figure—Anne Frank, let us say; and that the unlettered woman in Schlink's novel is the product, conscious or not, of a desire to divert from the culpability of a normally educated population in a nation famed for *Kultur*.

Everything the camera has guilelessly shown—the burning of Jewish houses of worship, the burning of Jewish books, the humiliation of Jewish fathers, the terrorization of Jewish children, the ditches heaped with Jewish dead—touches on the fate of Jews in 20th-century Europe. The pictures are fixed. In the less stable realm of words, the ghastly syllables of "Auschwitz" have resolutely come to denote the destruction of Jewish lives, Jewish academies and libraries, the whole vast organism of European Jewish civilization. Then how is it possible for a writer to set forth as a purposeful embodiment of the inmost meaning of the camps any emblem other than a Jewish emblem? It is possible the way it is possible to plant crosses, with heated intent, over the soil of Auschwitz. Sophie is not so much an individual as she is a counter-individual. She is not so much a character in a novel as she is a softly polemical device to distract us from the epitome. The faith and culture of Catholic Poles were not the faith and culture of the millions targeted by the explicit dogmas of the Final Solution. Styron's Sophie deflects from the total annihilation of Jewish presence in a Poland that continues with its land, language, religion, and institutions intact.

And when a writer describes in his novel the generation complicit in Jewish genocide as rife with members of the judiciary, physicians, lawyers, teachers, government officials, army officers, and so on, what are we to think when he fabricates a tale of German brutality premised on the pitiful absence of the alphabet? Who would not pity the helplessness of an illiterate, even when she belongs to the criminal SS? Have we ever before, in or out of fiction, been asked to pity a direct accomplice to Nazi murder? Here again is a softly rhetorical work that deflects from the epitome. It was not the illiterates of Germany who ordered the burning of books.

In the name of the autonomous rights of fiction, in the name of the sublime rights of the imagination, anomaly sweeps away memory; anomaly displaces history. In the beginning was not the word, but the camera—and at that time, in that place, the camera did not mislead. It saw what was there to see. The word came later, and in some instances it came not to illumine but to corrupt.

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Twenty-Four Lies About the Cold War

Gabriel Schoenfeld

THE IRON Curtain came down in 1989. Two years later, the Soviet Union itself was no more, and neither was the cold war—a conflict that, for well over four decades, had divided the world into two hostile camps.

In the course of those decades, wherever Marxism-Leninism had been planted by force of arms, millions of people were deliberately murdered or spent their best years in prison camps. Those not imprisoned lived constricted, fear-filled lives. In hot wars involving the superpowers in remote corners of the world, from Angola to Afghanistan to Nicaragua, the human toll was great on both sides. More than 54,000 Americans died in the Korean war; another 58,000 died defending South Vietnam.

Not surprisingly, for a conflict of such duration and magnitude, the causes of the dispute have themselves been a subject of controversy—not only between the two adversaries, but within the world of elite American opinion. For the first half of the cold war, the dominant view in this country, including among most liberals and intellectuals, held the USSR to be the clear aggressor. The Kremlin's brutal behavior, especially in Europe, posed an immense challenge to freedom; hence the policy of "firm containment," enunciated in 1947 by George F. Kennan and designed "to confront the Russians with unalterable counterforce at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interest of a peaceful and stable world."

But by the mid-1960's, as containment drew the United States deeper and deeper into Vietnam, both the policy itself and the view of the USSR it presupposed came under sharp attack. Self-proclaimed "revisionists" insisted that the cold war was nothing more than a cruelly absurd battle between two empires, equally reprehensible, equally thirsty for markets, power, and territory. Some went further, casting the United States alone as the prime offender; Moscow, argued such scholars as Gabriel Kolko and Richard J. Barnet, wanted nothing more than to preserve the status quo, while Washington, in the grip of an irrational anti-Communism, was pursuing an expansionist agenda in the name of a spurious "freedom." As the Vietnam war dragged on, politicizing American intellectual life to an unprecedented degree, the revisionist view became deeply entrenched among academic and mass-media elites.

Since the dissolution of the Communist world, however, at least a partial reversal of opinion has been under way. The historical revelations flowing in a torrent from the East, all confirming the older understanding of the origins of the cold war and the nature of the Soviet regime, have had the effect of putting revisionism on the defensive. A landmark in the process was the publication in 1997 of *We Now Know*, a comprehensive reexamination of cold-war history by the dean of American diplo-

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matic historians, John Lewis Gaddis.* Drawing on material from once top-secret archives in Eastern Europe and the USSR, the memoirs of ranking Communist officials, and the research of other Western scholars, Gaddis refuted the revisionist case point by point.

GIVEN THIS accomplishment, it came as welcome news that Gaddis would be serving as a principal adviser to a comprehensive series on the Soviet-American confrontation to be produced by the television network CNN. For that network, under the direction of its founder and chief executive Ted Turner, has over the years acquired a well-deserved reputation for standing to the Left of even "mainstream" media. In fact, this past June, just three months before *Cold War* was scheduled to start, CNN aired a "news-magazine" program, *Valley of Death*, falsely charging that the U.S. military had used poison gas to kill American defectors during the Vietnam war.† Though CNN (under a hail of criticism and the threat of lawsuits) repudiated the show and fired its producers, the episode raised questions about the internal journalistic culture that would allow a highly improbable, highly anti-American story on the air unchecked.

In scope and ambition *Cold War* is certainly a far cry from *Valley of Death*. The program that Ted Turner envisioned as "the most important production in [CNN's] eighteen-year history" was conceived not as a twenty-minute news magazine but as an immense 40-part series (later scaled back to 24) in which the viewer would be propelled through the frightening shoals and straits of the cold war in chronological sequence. Sir Jeremy Isaacs, the man behind the outstanding British World War II series of 25 years ago, *The World at War*, was brought in as executive producer and given a generous $12-million budget to do the job.

Under Isaacs's direction, a small army of production associates and assistants was assembled in London and then dispatched to more than 30 countries to secure interviews with eyewitnesses to pivotal events. Over the course of three years, more than 500 key historical figures were recorded talking about what they had seen and heard. Included were ranking government officials like Anatoly Dobrynin and Robert S. McNamara; observer-participants like Sergei Khrushchev, son of Nikita, and the historian and former diplomat Robert C. Tucker; and "ordinary" people ranging from Islamic guerrillas in Afghanistan to rank-and-file Communist-party members in France.

Combing archives around the world, the producers also compiled 8,500 film clips of varying degrees of significance. In all, more than a million feet of film were brought to London to be weighed for possible use. In line with Ted Turner's desire for an "international perspective," by which he meant that *Cold War* should strive to show the conflict from the viewpoint of its major protagonists, a team of scholars, including Gaddis as well as prominent historians from the University of London, the Institute of Universal History in Moscow, and other major research institutions in Europe, was recruited to offer a diversity of views and to "check every frame [of the film] and read every syllable" of the scripts for accuracy.

THE RESULTING show, which began to air in September 1998, and will conclude in April, has received both praise and criticism. I shall turn to the reactions in due course, but perhaps the first thing to say about *Cold War* is that some aspects of it are unquestionably excellent. Kenneth Branagh, the Irish actor and director, provides what is essential in the narrator of a documentary of this type: a voice that pronounces every word with unwavering authority. The score, by the British composer Carl Davis, is suitably ominous and dramatic. And, more centrally, quite a number of the interviews with notable cold-war personages leave indelible impressions. Listening, for example, to Aldrich Ames, the American who served as a Soviet "mole" inside the CIA, explain his betrayal of the United States while a ghastly video shows his most significant Soviet victim being arrested and interrogated in Moscow, distinctly raises one's consciousness of human evil.

In what it enables us to *see*, in the Ames case and in the thousands upon thousands of other images that scroll across the 24 segments of the show, *Cold War* truly is a magnificent achievement; if it is not "jaw-dropping," as CNN's publicity machine claims, at more than a few moments it comes close. The assistants who labored in tropical and frigid climes around the world succeeded in assembling a collection of images—both still and moving—that capture many crucial junctures of the momentous conflict, some of them long forgotten, many of them hitherto unseen.

The cold war, *Cold War* serves to remind us, had terrifying moments of heat. There is, for example, riveting footage of East Germans making their way over the primitive barriers that the Communists

* I reviewed this book in the September 1997 COMMENTARY.

† See "Nerve Gas, Lies, and Videotape" by Joshua Muravchik in the September 1998 COMMENTARY.

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first erected to divide Berlin in 1961, some of them pausing momentarily to extricate clothing and flesh that had become snagged on the barbed wire. And there are even more arresting stills of a young man, Peter Fechter, who attempted to escape to the West, was fired upon by East German guards, and, stranded atop the Berlin Wall, bled to death over a period of hours within yards of West Berliners too fearful to help.

There is also, to take still another example, a formerly top-secret clip of the great Soviet rocket disaster of 1960. Nikita Khrushchev, in a hurry to test-fire the SS-7 intercontinental ballistic missile, pushed his military to the corner-cutting point and beyond. With Marshal Mitrofan Nedelin, commander of the USSR's strategic rocket forces, and other top brass assembled on the launch pad, something went catastrophically awry; the liquid fuel in the rocket engine ignited prematurely. The camera shows scientists and military officers running from the blast, but not fast enough, and then being incinerated on the spot. All that was ever found of Marshal Nedelin were his medals.

In its march through contemporary history, *Cold War* also offers feeds from such disparate eruptions as the Korean war (bombs pounding innocent civilians), Romania in Communism's death throes (President Nicolae Ceauçescu and his wife struggling with their executioners as they are prepared for the firing squad), and the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan (guerrillas stalking and then blowing up a Soviet armored-personnel carrier, with soldiers dying horribly on the ground). In the brutality depicted in these pictures, we are reminded of the staggering costs in human life that the cold war imposed. And again and again we are also reminded that many more could have perished, that life itself could have been erased from the face of the earth: *Cold War* contains numerous shots of A- and H-bombs exploding terrifyingly, complete with flashes brighter than a thousand suns and enormous plumes of radioactive dust billowing into the atmosphere.

THE PICTURES contained in *Cold War* are immensely compelling. In the end, however, we demand more from a historical documentary than awe-inspiring images. How does *Cold War* stack up as a work of history?

The question is of no ordinary consequence. Apart from being screened before a worldwide television audience, the series is designed to introduce the topic of the cold war into the high-school curriculum of the United States. Already endorsed by the National Council for the Social Studies, the 24 one-hour segments are now being distributed to schools on video-cassette tapes for a nominal fee. CNN has also produced an extensive study guide and an interactive CD-ROM to help educators steer students through the East-West struggle. In addition, it is offering a lavishly illustrated companion volume, suitable for use as a textbook in schools, in which it is noted that John Lewis Gaddis had a leading hand.*

The critical reception of *Cold War*, as I have already noted, has been mixed. *Time*, weighing in in favor, called it "documentary television at its best"—"serious, thorough, and absorbing." The *New York Times* reviewer praised it as "gripping straightforward history . . . more intense than a John le Carré thriller." From some quarters, however, the words have been less kind, raising an echo of earlier ideological disputes. The *New Republic* lambasted the series for presenting the cold war as a "morally unintelligible contest between two equally dangerous superpowers." The historian Ronald Radosh, writing in the *New York Times*, similarly blasted the program for suggesting "a moral equivalence between the Soviet bloc and the democratic Western allies." The columnist Charles Krauthammer has charged that it "often goes beyond mere moral equivalence to cheap anti-Americanism."

For his part, John Lewis Gaddis, also writing in the *Times*, has mounted a vigorous defense. Of the several hundred Yale students for whom he has played the tapes, he asserts, "I see few if any come away convinced that the two sides in this struggle were morally equivalent." The series, Gaddis points out, shows such Soviet atrocities as "the Red Army rapes in Germany in 1945, the crushing of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968, the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and the persecution of dissidents in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe throughout the cold war." After watching these horrors, most students, says Gaddis, would not only reject the accusation of moral equivalence but find it "laughable."

One problem in sorting out the differences in these opinions is that, as Jeremy Isaacs has observed, "television history is short, by comparison with academic history, on analysis; long on anecdote." Another is that the series, to quote Gaddis, deliberate-

* *Cold War: An Illustrated History, 1945-1991, Companion to the CNN TV Series*, by Jeremy Isaacs and Taylor Downing. Little, Brown, 438 pp., $39.95.

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ly "did not try to settle old arguments about responsibility for the cold war"; instead, "we tried to allow all kinds of people to tell their stories." It is from these stories, and from the narrator's brief interjections and commentary, that both critics and defenders have fashioned their respective cases.

How to settle the dispute? One avenue might be to supplement a viewing of the film with an examination of the companion volume, which at least makes a stab at what Jeremy Isaacs calls "academic history." Are the moral and intellectual lapses pointed to by critics of the series repaired by the less anecdotal and more systematic approach of the book? Unfortunately, the answer is not at all. To the contrary, the problematic aspects of the film—and there are many such—are only magnified there, becoming infused with an extreme brand of revisionism. Though one could usefully examine the defects in every one of *Cold War*'s 24 segments, a glimpse of how it and its companion volume handle four crucial junctures is enough to provide a flavor of the whole.

LET US begin with the prehistory of the conflict. In the film, we are not told very much about Bolshevism in its early years, but what little there is is almost comic in what it chooses to include, and tragicomic in what it chooses to omit.

The cold war, we learn in "Comrades," the first episode of the series, had its origins after World War I "in a clash of ideologies, Communist and capitalist." The Allies, determined to snuff out the Marxist experiment, sent troops into Russia, thereby convincing Lenin and Stalin "that the West would seize any chance, embrace any ally, in order to destroy Communism." Winston Churchill, then the British secretary of state for war, is presented as a frothing-at-the-mouth anti-Communist, spouting the slogan, "Kill the Bolshie! Kiss the Hun!"

Do we get a more nuanced picture from the book? Hardly. We find instead still more anti-Communist raving. "[C]ivilization is being completely extinguished over gigantic areas," runs the single quotation, again from Churchill, explaining the British decision to send forces to Russian soil: "Bolsheviks hop and caper like troops of ferocious baboons." All this, the authors protest, about a government that, although "as authoritarian as that of the czars," was making an effort not to wipe out civilization but to renew it. Lenin's "socialist principles were meant to ensure decent education, free health care, common ownership of land, and fairness for all."

Where, in documentary or book, is the mass shooting of innocent civilians taken as hostages during the Red Terror and Russia's civil war? Where are the millions who died in the famine deliberately engineered by Lenin during the period known as War Communism? Where are all the other acts of savagery that, in their totality, made the Russian Revolution such a fitting preface to this century of barbarism? Not a hint of a critical thought about Lenin appears anywhere, only prattling tributes to his "deep commitment to bettering the lives of ordinary Russians."

Nor do matters improve when CNN turns, in the second of the four junctures, to the cold war's more immediate causes in the years following World War II. Here, in a pattern that will recur, the USSR is consistently depicted as weak, inward-looking, and consumed by its own internal stresses, while the United States is cast as warlike, expansionist, and consumed by a senseless fear of Communism, Communists, and the USSR.

Thus we learn that Stalin, presiding over a country that lay in ruin, "feared encirclement by the capitalist powers." He grew especially "nervous" when, after 1945, America began "extending its influence and power all over the world" out of an evident determination to create "a free-enterprise Western bloc." This left the USSR with no choice; it "was *forced* to build its own rival bloc" (emphasis added).

Although President Harry Truman "suspected that Stalin was aiming at world domination," in fact, CNN assures us, Soviet aims were not aggressive at all: the USSR was merely seeking a buffer zone. A somewhat more real prospect was that left-wing forces in prostrate Western Europe might triumph via the ballot box. Responding to this menace with an extensive aid program, Truman wrapped his proposal in feverish anti-Communism, stating in his historic 1947 address to Congress that "the United States would contain the advance of Communism anywhere on the globe." "This," CNN's narrator pronounces with solemnity, "was the official declaration of the cold war."

If the film suggests that Truman's "declaration of war" was a foolish political ploy that brought horrendous consequences, the book emphasizes America's lack of discernment and its overweening need for an external enemy: "it suited Western interests for public opinion to perceive the Russian position in negative terms." The United States was thus fully primed to react with hysteria to the innocuous but harsh-sounding tics that punctuated Stalin's political rhetoric. On top of everything else, this knee-jerk response was traceable in part to the abysmally low quality of American leadership. Truman, we are told, had a distressing tendency "to see things in clearly

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defined black and white terms"; he "lacked the patience to weigh up subtleties of argument"; and he was "largely ignorant of foreign affairs." Worst of all, he surrounded himself with men of similarly low capacities, among them General George C. Marshall, who became Secretary of State in 1947 and was neither "well informed on foreign affairs" nor eager to learn.

Among Truman's advisers, only Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace is presented as free of intellectual or character flaws. This advocate of "a more conciliatory line" understood, according to the book, "that the Russians were only trying to stand up for what they had won at Yalta and Potsdam." And yet, in becoming a "dissenting voice," Wallace was compelled by Truman to resign, an act for which the entire world paid a price since Wallace was the only member of Truman's cabinet to grasp that "[f]or America to take a tougher line would be to force Stalin to take a tougher line in response."

One hardly knows where to begin with this farrago of inventions. Perhaps the most forceful rebuttal is the one penned by John Lewis Gaddis himself in *We Now Know*. There, Gaddis truthfully explains the conflict's origins in terms diametrically opposed to those offered on the program to which he served as adviser. The U.S.-Soviet confrontation, he writes, had its roots not in anything America did or failed to do in the diplomatic, economic, or military realm, but almost entirely in the peculiar characteristics of the Soviet tyrant and his regime. "It was Stalin's disposition to wage cold wars," notes Gaddis in *We Now Know*; "[h]e had done so in one form or another throughout his life." And "*as long as Stalin was running the Soviet Union a cold war was unavoidable*" (emphasis in the original).

In the chaotic aftermath of World War II, Gaddis goes on to state, what the historical record suggests about Stalin's behavior "is not that Stalin had limited objectives, only that he had no timetable" for realizing whatever objectives he had. In the words of his right-hand man, Vyacheslav Molotov, "Our ideology stands for offensive operations when possible, and if not, we wait." It was mainly thanks to Truman's resolve, and to the decisive steps he and Marshall took to demonstrate that resolve—steps that CNN twists into provocative acts of aggression—that Stalin chose to forgo "offensive operations" and spend his energy instead on digesting the European territories the Red Army had already managed to swallow and subjugating their populations through coercion and naked terror.

As for the halo that appears over the head of Henry Wallace, CNN's book somehow neglects to inform its readers that when Truman forced him from office, the Commerce Secretary had already moved well down the path toward an openly pro-Soviet stance. By 1948, when he himself ran for the presidency on the Communist-backed Progressive party ticket, Wallace was defending Stalin's foreign policy in all its manifestations, claiming, for example, without any evidence but in perfect synchrony with Moscow's line, that the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in 1948 had been necessary to forestall an American-sponsored coup.

As *Cold War* moves forward, it only rolls downhill. In a segment entitled "Reds," devoted to the 1950's, the narrator tells us in the sternest of tones that "both sides turned their fear inward against their own people. They hunted the enemy within." On the Soviet side, there was the "Gulag—the secret universe of labor camps." On the American side, there was McCarthyism, a phenomenon that saw people "imprisoned" and "their livelihoods taken away."

Charles Krauthammer has written scathingly about this episode as a blatant example of "moral equivalence," in which the murder of tens of millions is absurdly compared with the incarceration of a number of Hollywood personalities who lost their jobs or were jailed for refusing to answer questions before congressional committees. But "Reds" is also an example of the other phenomenon noted by Krauthammer, the tendency of *Cold War* to move beyond moral equivalence to "cheap anti-Americanism." In fact, the episode fosters a lie, portraying the U.S. in a grotesque caricature while going a considerable distance to excuse Stalin for his monstrous crimes.

In the 1950's, Kenneth Branagh tells us, "anti-Communism became the language for a new, more defiant vision of America." In no time at all, a wave of terror descended on the United States. As "persecution spread," labor organizations were "banned, radical groups indicted, [and] demonstrations broken up." Talk of the national interest was used "to justify any method of locating subversives."

At the same time that civil liberties were being extinguished in the United States, they were also being trod upon in the USSR. But in Moscow's case, according to CNN, the authorities were not engaging in a "witchhunt"; they really did have legitimate reasons for alarm. The cold war, after all, had "heightened tensions and reinforced fears, not just of internal subversion but of another war." And "obsessive" and "paranoid" as Stalin may have been, he did have real enemies. Among them was the

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CIA, which was carrying out a radio "propaganda" campaign directed against Eastern Europe and sending "armed exiles back into the Soviet empire." In other words, the Soviet secret police had good reason to exercise "vigilance against spies and saboteurs."

The book adds important qualifications to this ludicrous whitewashing of reality—McCarthyism, it concedes, "paled in comparison to the paranoia that permeated the Soviet system"; "what in the United States was an aberration was in the Soviet world the system itself"; and many thousands perished. It then proceeds to vitiate these perfectly valid points by portraying the U.S. as a society in the throes of a totalitarianism every bit as benighted as that prevailing in the USSR. Thus, if the Soviet Union suffered a "Great Terror" in which neighbors denounced neighbors and children denounced parents, the United States suffered a "Great Fear" in which "neighbors were encouraged to spy on one another. Parents were asked to inform on their children, children on their parents," and only by naming names "could penitent [American] Communists purge themselves and escape further torture by the Inquisition."

In short, the U.S. and the USSR in the 1950's—a period, let us remember, when the Communists, having destroyed all possibility of democracy in Eastern Europe, and having conducted outright military aggression in Korea, were still trying to foment civil war and internal subversion elsewhere in the world, including in the United States, while systematically continuing to brutalize and immiserate their own people at home—were not merely morally equivalent, they were essentially identical in key respects.

By the time CNN gets to the cold war's endgame, the last of the four junctures I propose to examine, it succeeds in doing the impossible: giving credit to Moscow for terminating the conflict, and blaming Washington for attempting to extend it.

Ronald Reagan, not surprisingly, is the scoundrel of the story; in the film, and particularly in the book, he is charged with every sin. Like his predecessor Harry Truman, Reagan is described as ignorant of foreign affairs, but also as feebleminded, exhibiting his mental impairments in direct proportion to the zeal with which he adhered to his "fervent" anti-Communism.

Given Reagan's "simplistic vision of an ideological crusade against Communism," it is no surprise in CNN's eyes that his defense policy should have amounted to giving the Pentagon "almost everything it wanted." This included not only the right to attempt the "nuclear decapitation" of the Soviet political and military leadership in the event of war but also a chimerical program of missile defense, the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)—"Star Wars"—adopted "without any analysis of the technological problems or the costs involved." Needless to say, "these hawkish plans were funded by immense budget deficits and by cutting back on domestic welfare programs."

Reagan's unrestrained military policies were made the more threatening, we learn, by being conjoined with his "aggressive pronouncements against Communism." From his belligerent rhetoric—he was actually reckless enough to call the USSR "the focus of evil in the modern world" and "the evil empire"—it became clear that he was striving "for outright victory in the cold war." In pursuit of this ambition, which, CNN suggests, put the destruction of the entire globe at the distance of a hair's breadth, the United States found itself allied with unsavory forces everywhere: a multitude of right-wing military juntas, fanatically murderous Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan, and even, in Cambodia, "the genocidal Khmer Rouge." These alliances, *Cold War*'s coffee-table book instructs us, were "a direct result of Reagan's 'noble cause' of fighting Communism."

If Reagan comes across as a superficially genial but in fact quite malevolent villain, Mikhail Gorbachev is presented by CNN as a charming prince of peace. Elected unanimously—"this was the Soviet way of doing things"—Gorbachev understood the profound and hitherto concealed truth that the Soviet Union needed "to move forward." Many in the USSR "were excited by the appointment of a young, dynamic new leader"—for some, "he was a messiah coming to save them"—and Gorbachev responded to this popular enthusiasm in kind. He "regularly visited factories and colleges" and "loved to meet people."

One hardly has to credit Reagan with singlehandedly liquidating the Soviet empire to recognize that *Cold War* presents him in full-blown caricature. A far more generous assessment of Reagan and his policies can be found in, of all places, the memoirs of Anatoly Dobrynin, the arch-supporter of détente and longtime Soviet ambassador to the United States.* Even as he bemoans Reagan's "gross and even primitive anti-Sovietism" and confirms that the President's rhetoric and defense policies shocked the Soviet Politburo, Dobrynin acknowledges that this cut two ways.

* *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold-War Presidents* (1995).

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Dobrynin, in fact, showers Reagan not only with abuse but with accolades: "opponents and experts alike clearly underestimated him"; he "proved to be a much deeper person than he first appeared"; he "was endowed with natural instinct, flair, and optimism"; "[h]is imagination supported big ideas like SDI"; and, finally and most significantly considering the source, "Reagan's achievements in dealing with the Soviet Union could certainly compare favorably with, and perhaps even surpass, those of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger."

Similarly, one hardly needs to view Gorbachev as an unreconstructed hard-liner to understand that CNN's adulatory sketch is designed primarily to depict him as the exact opposite of Reagan. (Gorbachev himself is quoted calling Reagan a "caveman" and a "dinosaur.") In addition to all his winning personal qualities, Gorbachev, we are told, also grasped the importance of "ending the arms race," going so far as to propose cutting the USSR's nuclear-missile force in half if only the U.S. would scrap "Star Wars." Predictably, the ever-bellicose Reagan, "urged on by his hawkish national-security adviser," said no.

Gorbachev, it bears remembering, is reviled in Russia today (as he was back then, too, *pace* CNN); and it also bears remembering one of the reasons why. The last Soviet leader began his tenure in office not as a democrat or a reformer but as a true member of the faith, who intended to restore the ailing Communist church to health through a policy of "*uskoreniye*." Despite its bevy of Russian consultants and advisers, CNN's book mendaciously translates this word as "acceleration of reform," adding that "to awaken Soviet society from its lethargy, Gorbachev felt it was essential to inspire working people."

In fact, *uskoreniye* simply means "acceleration," and it was the slogan under which Gorbachev, in his first flailing efforts to wrestle with the USSR's insoluble problems, attempted to speed up the tempo at which the working people worked, not, however, by "inspiring" them but by imposing greater discipline. Unable to overcome the national torpor through such measures as a crackdown on "shopping"—i.e., standing in unending queues for basic staples—during working hours, he then abandoned this approach in favor of other tinkerings that only managed to "accelerate" the system's complete collapse.

The error in translation here is a small but telling example of the spirit of the book—if not, indeed, of the documentary as well. It goes without saying that neither Gorbachev nor Reagan was the unalloyed creature of good or evil that CNN strains to suggest. Just as there are issues worth debating about the origins of the cold war, so there are issues worth debating about its end, not least among them the question of whether the corroding Soviet superstructure collapsed in the late 1980's merely by virtue of its own dead weight or as a result of pressure brought to bear from the United States. Whatever view one takes on that point, the film, and the book even more so, employ crude rhetorical tricks to offer a burlesque not only of the motives of the actors on the Soviet side but of the undeniable risks Reagan assumed in frontally challenging the USSR at a moment when its army was on the march and, militarily, at least, it was becoming mightier by the day.

AMONG THE troubling matters raised by this entire CNN project is the growing authority accorded to "oral history," now becoming a major subspecialty of the historical profession itself. Even if *Cold War* had truly confined itself to doing what Gaddis says it set out to do—namely, allowing "all kinds of people simply to tell their stories," without attempting to settle issues of historical responsibility—there would still be ample reasons to object to it.

History, as Gaddis is well aware, is not just a random assemblage of "stories," all equally interesting and equally authoritative. The raw materials of history need precisely the sort of sifting and weighing that competent historians are trained to undertake; they require, at the very least, evaluation, the same task a jury performs in a court of law to determine whether testimony is credible or self-serving and deceptive. And after that evaluation is performed, they need to be placed into some larger framework or context. Despite what Gaddis has written in the *New York Times*, the mere fact that *Cold War* shows us pictures of various Soviet atrocities is utterly irrelevant to the charge that it systematically portrays the U.S. and the USSR as moral equivalents.

By emphasizing "minimal narration" and an "international perspective," and by excluding interviews with professional historians and focusing only on "participants in the events," *Cold War* was destined from the start to be, at best, an exercise in historical distortion. A parade of silver-haired former Soviet apparatchiks appears on screen, wearing elegant suits and looking every bit like American academics as they tell us in soothing tones what may be truths or what may be lies. The former KGB chief Vladimir Kryuchkov, invited to explain how the USSR sent its army across an international frontier in 1979, generously complies: "If we didn't go into Afghanistan, then some other coun-

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tries would." Perhaps Kryuchkov is here accurately restating the considerations of the Soviet Politburo in the fall and winter of that year. Perhaps, throughout a long career swimming inside the entrails of the Soviet Union's secret police, he was always a scrupulous truth-teller. Or perhaps not. Whatever the case, viewers of *Cold War* are never made aware of the enormous question mark that dangles over the words of such a man, a torturer whose recollections are here given equal weight with the recollections of the tortured.*

Still, in the end, it is not its failure properly to evaluate the numerous interviews from which it is woven that is the most objectionable aspect of *Cold War*. It is the absurd evaluations the program *does* provide, both in the accompanying book and in the tendentious commentary of the narrator. And that, too, raises a question: why is it that so many people in the West continue to cling to a version of history in which the most egregious Soviet conduct is excused or explained away, while the United States is condemned for transgressions it did not commit?

In the 1930's, according to CNN's book, those in the West who cast their sympathies with the USSR did so because they "hated the inequalities and injustices they saw in their own societies." In addition, they were "unaware" of what was going on in the Soviet Union, a country that was "a closed book." This explanation is itself a falsehood.

Despite the hermetic seal Stalin attempted to impose throughout his dictatorial reign, there was no shortage in the West of English-language reporting making it plain that a man-made calamity was unfolding in the Soviet Union. The "idealists" (CNN's term) who in the 1930's regarded the USSR as a progressive beacon for humanity were not unaware of what was going on; they fully understood, as Lenin liked to repeat, that when you chop wood, the chips will fly. But when it came to those chips—millions of innocent people being done to death by starvation or pistol shots to the back of the head—they consciously averted their eyes.

Today, after the publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*, after the opening of Soviet archives themselves, after the accumulation of so many unalterable facts, it is no longer possible to claim one is "unaware" of what the Soviet Union was and how it behaved over the course of its disastrous seven decades. That behavior fully merits Reagan's accurate term for it: "the focus of evil in the modern world." Yet, as the very existence of the CNN documentary testifies, the same impulse to avert one's eyes, and the same hatred of democratic society, are with us still. It beggars the imagination that John Lewis Gaddis, a historian who has shown he knows better, should have lent his name to such an exercise.

SECOND ONLY to the rampage that Hitler embarked upon in Europe in 1939, the cold war was the most terrible conflict of the terrible century that is now drawing to its close. As younger generations that did not live through those terrors come of age, CNN's 24-part *Cold War* series, with its panoply of educational appurtenances, is likely to be the one version of this momentous stretch of the past that most people will see and remember. Though the film succeeds, sometimes brilliantly, at giving a vivid sense of what kinds of tribulations and anguish and nightmares the Soviet-American conflict entailed, it nevertheless advances an utterly false explanation of what the struggle was all about.

Although it remains unfashionable to say so plainly, Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan had it right: at bottom the cold war *was* a colossal battle between good and evil, between freedom and slavery, between democracy and totalitarianism. It was also a battle in which, at every step of the way, tremendously difficult moral choices had to be faced by the forces of good. On some occasions those forces, led by the United States, took actions that were questionable, even highly questionable; on some, rare occasions, they took actions that were indefensible and wrong.

But recognizing the moral ambiguities of the war, and the occasional but very real moral shortcomings and failures of the West, is one thing; CNN's version of history is entirely another. As that version proceeds, the "noble cause" of defending freedom is mocked, good is turned into evil and evil into good, and the moral and political categories that distinguish a democratic country like the United States from a totalitarian one like the USSR are blurred and then entirely erased. Considering the great lengths to which the Soviet Union went to falsify history, the fact that *Cold War* is today being introduced into the standard curriculum of American high schools is a nightmarish irony. It is also an insult to all those who paid a terrible price for risking their own freedom in freedom's name.

* In the segments of *Cold War* devoted to the Soviet-American competition in the third world, the Communist side is consistently represented by attractive-looking, articulate spokesmen—Soviets, Cubans, Nicaraguans, and Angolans—who passionately and persuasively defend their cause. The U.S. side, by contrast, is represented by a gaggle of cynical ex-CIA men who not only look like thugs from central casting but speak like them as well. By this means is a process that looks like evenhandedness put in the service of deliberate historical falsification.

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Poison-Pen Pals

Joseph Epstein

WRITERS CAN be cordial, charming, social ornaments, but their talent for retaining friends is, on balance, less than impressive. They are notable for touchiness, a want of reciprocity, self-protectiveness—qualities conducing less to the preservation than to the ruin of friendships, at least of the kind that endure. The degree to which these qualities derive from the fact that writers spend too much time alone, dwelling upon their fantasies and their failure to achieve them, or are inherent in the activity of molding the penury of their actual experience into publishable works, varies from case to case. And this is not, of course, to speak of the drunks, neurotics, and pure creeps who sometimes appear to preponderate among contemporary authors.

Not only do they seem unsuited for friendship in general, writers are even more lamentably ill-equipped when it comes to dealings with their fellow writers. "People can be friends," says a character named Izzy Thornbush in John Updike's recent *Bech at Bay*. "Writers, no. Writers are condemned to hate one another." Rivalrousness, envy, ideological argumentativeness, and *Schadenfreude* being their reigning emotional states, these nicely pave the way for inconstancy, infidelity, and straight-out betrayal. Having mastered the means of expression, and having at their disposal the modes of publication, writers differ from the normally irritable and resentful by being all too ready to go public with their spleen.

Exceptions have existed, large-hearted writers with a genuine gift for friendship: John Keats was one such, Chekhov another; Turgenev and Henry James also qualify. And one can also find discrete acts of unmotivated generosity or kindness on the part of writers toward other writers: Edith Wharton secretly slipping funds into Henry James's royalty account at Scribner's; Ezra Pound generously promoting the career of T. S. Eliot and, through skillful editing, helping to bring *The Waste Land* into print in its best possible form; F. Scott Fitzgerald going out of his way to get the editor Maxwell Perkins to take on the work of the young Ernest Hemingway.

Generally, though, the record is one of almost unrelieved unpleasantness. The causes of this unpleasantness, Norman Podhoretz shows in his artful and penetrating new memoir, *Ex-Friends*,* can occasionally involve political or ideological conviction, as in the case of Podhoretz's own breaks with writers and intellectuals to whom he was once close, or their breaks with him. More often, the causes are petty and "merely" personal.

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* Its subtitle is "Falling Out with Allen Ginsberg, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Lillian Hellman, Hannah Arendt, and Norman Mailer." Free Press, 244 pp., $25.00.

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Bad feeling was first planted between Thackeray and Dickens, for example, when the latter chose not to use the former as his illustrator for *The Pickwick Papers*, and the bad feeling was exacerbated over Dickens's belief that Thackeray was spreading rumors of his love affair with Ellen Ternan. D.H. Lawrence, a man of nearly perpetual testiness, broke with nearly all his literary friends, perhaps with none more crushingly than Katherine Mansfield and her husband John Middleton Murry. Hemingway, in *A Moveable Feast*, lined up the various writers who had aided him when he was a young man in Paris and shot them down with the most vicious tales he could contrive about each of them: John Dos Passos, Gertrude Stein, Ford Madox Ford, with Fitzgerald, whom he wrote off as a sexually insecure drunk, getting the roughest treatment of all. The critic Edmund Wilson, after being initially helpful to Vladimir Nabokov when he first arrived in this country, later had the temerity to question Nabokov's grasp of Russian (!) in so aggressive a way as to cause a permanent rupture in their friendship.

When two writers inhabit the same family, the unpleasantness is often only more intense: a vivid example is the critic and novelist Anthony West's book attacking his mother Rebecca for her selfish neglect of him—which must, for her, author of *The Meaning of Treason*, have given treason itself a whole new meaning. Fallings-out among brothers are especially common. There is reason to believe that so sterling a character as William James felt animosity toward his younger brother Henry: turning down membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters, William offered, not altogether facetiously, the consideration that "my younger and shallower and vainer younger brother" was already a member. To balance this, there is evidence in his letters that Henry did not appreciate William's rather philistine views on his own exquisite literary art. The Mann brothers, Thomas and Heinrich, were divided by politics and Heinrich's envy throughout their professional lives.

A COUPLE of years ago, the novelist Alexander Theroux wrote an article blasting his better-known brother Paul, also a novelist as well as a travel writer, for, among other things, cowardice, pretentiousness, and celebrity-chasing. The following sentence conveys the scorched-earth quality of Alexander's treatment of his brother: "Paul has bowel worries and eats prunes for breakfast and once made inquiries of me about platform shoes." In his own words, or quoting others, he indicts Paul for snobbery, Anglomania, cheapness, idiotic opinionatedness, self-importance, prickliness, and betrayal: for being "a terrible enemy but . . . much worse as a friend."

What is interesting about this catalogue of accusations is that it roughly parallels the one leveled by Paul Theroux himself against V. S. Naipaul in *Sir Vidia's Shadow: A Friendship Across Five Continents*.* This book treats its subject to an act of personal scrutiny as sustained and punishing as any I know. *Sir Vidia's Shadow* has itself come in for its own share of punishment at the hands of reviewers, having been roundly attacked as an expression of bad temper, resentment, and deep envy. "Mr. Theroux emerges as a petty, vindictive man," runs a characteristic comment in a review in the *Wall Street Journal*. Yet I myself found Theroux's account convincing on various fronts, and never less than full of interest, even when dubious; perhaps most interesting when most dubious.

Paul Theroux is an American, born in 1941, who has lived the greater part of his adult life outside the United States. V. S. Naipaul, born in 1932, is of Indian heritage; he was raised in the former British colony of Trinidad in the West Indies, won a scholarship to Oxford, and has lived chiefly in England ever since. Both men are in the tradition of the restless writer who travels to find his subjects; in the modern era, this tradition is largely English, associated with such names as Graham Greene, Somerset Maugham, Evelyn Waugh, Patrick Leigh Fermor. Traveling has for the most part taken both men to third-world countries where the terrain tends to be exotic, the squalor quotient high, the indigenes not necessarily friendly, and the journey often a touch dangerous.

Africa, in fact, was the scene of their first meeting. The year was 1966, and Paul Theroux was a twenty-five-year-old teacher at the University of Makerere, in Kampala, Uganda—this was before the tyrant Idi Amin wrecked the country. Naipaul and his wife arrived for one of those teaching stints that serious but financially less than successful writers take on to make ends meet. At thirty-four, Naipaul was already a published and critically celebrated writer—his novel *The Mimic Men* would win the 1967 Booker Prize—and one painfully exacting in his standards and utterly confident in his point of view.

"I had never met anyone," Theroux writes, "so certain, so intense, so observant, so hungry, so impatient, so intelligent." And, miraculous as it

* Houghton Mifflin, 288 pp., $25.00.

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seemed to Theroux, then still a yearning, would-be author who had composed only poems, this stimulating, difficult man not only seemed to like him but thought he had in him the makings of a writer. Naipaul took him seriously and regaled him with advice. A friendship, though not one between equals, was under way.*

One of the first things that impressed Theroux was Naipaul's utter independence of mind and opinion. In matters literary, he openly expressed distaste for the work of Jane Austen, Mark Twain, Henry James, Emily Dickinson, and George Orwell, not to mention most contemporary English and American writers then of high repute. He had his doubts about Camus. He thought contemporary African literature, including the novels of Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe, little more than acts of mimicry, saying: "You can't beat a novel out on a drum." He himself read the Latin poet Martial and the Bible.

Outside the realm of literature, Naipaul claimed to hate music, all music; he also hated jokes. He disliked flowers. He despised children, telling Theroux: "I do not want children. I do not want to read about children. I do not want to see them." The Kenyan politician Tom Mboya, then greatly admired among Western intellectuals, he referred to as "a fat thug." Of Ian Smith, the leading political figure in Rhodesia, he said that "he is qualified to mend bicycles in Surrey [England]. Nothing more than that." His word for the people he encountered in Uganda who had intellectual pretensions was "infies," short for inferior persons. But, then, most people for Naipaul were "infies."

Nor was Naipaul's outrageousness confined to his opinions. Complaint was his natural note, his sole melody. He caused difficulties wherever he went. He was cold to his wife, with whom, Theroux reports, he did not sleep. He was a vegetarian, but a vegetarian who refused to eat salad. He was merciless to the students he taught, telling one young woman that her work was hopeless but her handwriting very nice, and suggesting that a literary contest offer only a third prize since no one could possibly be worthy of first or second. He wrote harsh put-down letters, and in all relationships was touchier than a fresh burn.

I HAVE said that *Sir Vidia's Shadow* is an attack, but it is one most artfully executed. Theroux slowly builds up to it. In the book's early chapters, Naipaul's reactionary opinions are shown to have a certain charm, deriving in good part from their outrageousness, which in turn derives from an absolute indifference to any sort of correctness, political or otherwise. Although Theroux records Naipaul's idiosyncrasies, early in the book it is left to others to say critical things about him. When Theroux tells a young writer named B. S. Johnson that he is staying with the Naipauls, Johnson replies, "Naipaul is a prick." As for Theroux, despite everything that seems rebarbative in Naipaul, he finds in him a quality of independence that he cannot but admire. "I don't have a country," he records Naipaul telling him at one point, and at another, "I have no home."

He also has gravity, particularly about art, which he feels must be difficult, a struggle. Naipaul, writes Theroux, was "brilliant, and passionate in his convictions, and to be with him, as a friend or fellow writer, I had always to be at my best." Later, when Theroux himself begins to write novels, "what mattered most was that Vidia, a brilliant writer, believed in me." A letter praising Theroux's novel *Girls at Play* "sustained me for the next two years." No wonder that, as Theroux writes, friendship with such a man became "as strong as love."

Soon, however, Naipaul's charming outrageousness starts to take, in the pages of *Sir Vidia's Shadow*, a more and more ugly turn. He is shown to be cruel to servants; never to pick up a check. He is tough on his younger brother Shiva—also a writer—because Shiva has long hair and is unpunctual. He expresses racist views: of George Wallace, the segregationist governor of Alabama, Naipaul remarks, "He has an awful lot of common sense."

Subtly, the relationship between the older and the younger writer begins to shift. Theroux recounts how Naipaul, after setting up a grand lunch at the Connaught Hotel in London, stiffed him with the £20 bill. He makes him out to be a wine idiot: "I think you'll like this," Naipaul says, pouring a white burgundy. "It's balanced, it's firm, perhaps a bit fleshy, but smooth and, I think you'll agree, round." And he underscores his hypocrisy: Naipaul mocks the notion of a British knighthood, and the two friends share a joke about his changing his name to Sir V. S. Nye-Powell, OBE; but when knighthood is later offered, Naipaul of course accepts it.

At this stage in their friendship, things have not yet irreparably fallen apart. Although Theroux establishes himself as a frequently published novelist—eight books before he is thirty—he is not yet commercially or critically successful. He is still

* An early expression of this friendship, as Theroux relates, took the form of help Naipaul gave him in composing an essay, "On Cowardice," that would appear in the June 1967 COMMENTARY.

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deep enough in thrall to his much-admired friend to publish, in 1972, *V. S. Naipaul: An Introduction to His Work*. He ends that slender volume by underscoring the integrity behind Naipaul's talent:

> He conceals nothing; his ingenuousness, his avoidance of sarcasm, and his humor—a delight that no essay can do justice to—make him very special among writers; there is no one like him writing today. . . . It is evidence of the uniqueness of his vision, but a demonstration of the odds against him, that no country can claim him.

When, in 1975, Theroux's travel book, *The Great Railway Bazaar*, becomes an immediate best-seller, a deeper change is registered. Asking Naipaul's help with a planned trip to India, he senses, for the first time, a reluctance. The days when, as Theroux says, "I listened: I was Boswell, he was Johnson," are drawing to an end. Though Theroux continues to feel "blessed for all [Naipaul's] good advice, cautioned by his mistakes, stimulated by his intellect, enlightened by his work"—and also "aware of his contradictions"—from here to the close of the book it is the darker side of those contradictions that gets emphasized.

Naipaul's attitudes are now made to seem less amusing, more vicious. Theroux quotes his response to an interviewer's question about the future of Africa: "Africa has no future." When the poet Derek Walcott calls Naipaul a bigot in print, Theroux does not rise to his friend's defense. He is particularly hard on Naipaul as a husband, portraying him as insensitive, demanding, bullying, the perpetrator of many mental cruelties. "Stop chuntering," he is always telling his wife Pat whenever she expresses unhappiness. Yet Pat Naipaul, Theroux informs us, is all the things Vidia is not: discreet, kind, generous, polite, grateful, magnanimous. When she eventually dies of cancer, one is somehow reminded that cancer was once called the disease of the disappointed.

For a good part of his marriage, Theroux reveals to us, Naipaul had a mistress, whom he not infrequently took along when doing the legwork for his travel books. This, for Theroux, gives those books themselves a strong taint of fraudulence. "What was the challenge in traveling with a loving woman?" he asks. "There were no alien places on earth for the man who had his lover to cling to at night and tell him he was a genius." This negative opinion spreads, causing Theroux to revise his overall judgment of Naipaul's literary gifts: the man who in 1972 was unlike anyone else writing today turns out to be "the monomaniac in print that he was in person." Theroux even confesses, dramatically, that by 1979 his was the deciding vote that prevented Naipaul from winning the Booker Prize for *A Bend in the River*, a novel about an African country under the sway of revolutionary corruption and violence.

After his wife's death, Naipaul marries again—not his mistress but a younger Pakistani journalist. The overbearingness of this woman, in Theroux's account, is the cause of the final rupture of his more than thirty-year relation with V. S. Naipaul. The first sign of the end comes when Theroux discovers three of his own books, inscribed to his friend Vidia, for sale in a bookseller's catalogue. When he queries Naipaul about this, he receives a harsh fax from the new Mrs. Naipaul making it plain that he, Theroux, can no longer expect to find himself welcome in Naipaul's company.

"She's crazy, I thought, and I began to laugh and crinkle the fax paper in my hand," is how Theroux reports his response. He sends back an equally harsh letter, and, one thing leading to another, break-up becomes inevitable. When, some while later, the two men encounter each other on a street in London, Theroux asks if there is anything left of their friendship. "Take it on the chin and move on," is all Naipaul can offer. "Before we got to the Cromwell Road," Theroux writes, "I had begun this book in my head, starting at the beginning."

At some point in the course of this extraordinary work, one has to ask how reliable is Paul Theroux, not only in his general analysis of Naipaul's character but in the matter of the words he ascribes to him. What means do we have of judging? None, really, except for the internal logic, by which I mean the consistency—or credible inconsistency—of comments and details as they build up through the course of the book. My own view is that, on this count, *Sir Vidia's Shadow* passes the test. The V. S. Naipaul who appears in its pages is a marvelous character; I have by no means read all of Paul Theroux's fiction, but I do not believe he is a good enough novelist to have invented anyone quite so extraordinary.

Defending Naipaul, David Pryce-Jones, in a review of this book in the *American Spectator*, notes that "Theroux did not *witness* Naipaul's cruelties to publicity girls, waiters, and other defenseless bystanders, but he repeats second-hand gossip about them" (emphasis added). And Pryce-Jones adds that Theroux is foolish to take everything Naipaul said literally, "as if he weren't trying things on for

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effect or didn't himself suffer insecurity." Perhaps so. But Naipaul has said enough outside the pages of *Sir Vidia's Shadow*—I recall an interview in which he allowed as how he thought all fat people were immoral—to convince me that nothing Theroux has him say inside the book is wholly invented or inconceivable.

Part of the glory of V. S. Naipaul as a writer has been, in fact, his willingness to speak his mind on subjects that in almost everyone else tend to cause cowering. As a "person of color," he was for quite a long time granted a rare license to speak with candor about dealings between the first and third worlds, and he made the most of it. In his novels, essays, and larger works of nonfiction, he exposes the deep fraudulence that has tainted both sides in these dealings: the gauzy unreality of the Western liberal Left, the readiness to con on the part of "natives" being sucked up to, and betwixt the two more than a sufficiency of bad faith to go around. In *A Bend in the River*, a French couple working in a newly independent African country relax by playing the recordings of Joan Baez. Naipaul's narrator acidly remarks:

> You couldn't listen to the sweet songs about injustice unless you expected justice and received it much of the time. You couldn't sing songs about the end of the world unless . . . you felt that the world was going on and on and you were safe in it.

Only Naipaul has had the intellectual courage to tell such home truths.

Theroux writes of Naipaul that "really there was not a living writer he praised or any dead ones he acknowledged as exemplars." But this is to overlook Joseph Conrad, about whom Naipaul has written in trenchant praise and whom he, at his best, can sometimes resemble. He is like Conrad in being a writer without one true society but who knows many societies very well from without. He is like Conrad, too, in seeming to speak on behalf of a wider, a larger, a higher civilization—what Naipaul himself, in a lecture in New York in 1990, called "Our Universal Civilization."

This larger civilization, as he describes it at the end of his lecture, "implies a certain kind of awakened spirit," containing "the idea of the individual, responsibility, choice, the life of the intellect, the idea of vocation and perfectibility and achievement." Coming from a peripheral Caribbean culture, Naipaul believes that he has "seen or felt" certain of the core qualities of this civilization "more freshly than people for whom those things were everyday," and in writing about "half-made societies that seemed doomed to remain half-made," he has emphasized the corruption that has kept them from attaining precisely the ideal of universal civilization. This great subject—an entirely modern and politically international subject—has lent Naipaul's writing much of its impressive gravity.

Paul Theroux picks up on this point, if indirectly, when, of Naipaul's conversation, he notes: "He had that disconcerting way of turning chitchat into metaphysics about the human condition." True enough. But that leads to a question: would Theroux allow that, between the two of them, Naipaul is the superior mind, and the superior writer? Not merely superior, but in another league, really? Theroux has undoubtedly had the greater commercial success—well-selling books, movie deals—but Naipaul has had the success of being taken with the greatest seriousness that has eluded Theroux just about completely.

He must feel this deeply—which may be the reason why, in my reading, at any rate, the one unbelievable character in *Sir Vidia's Shadow* is the man who wrote it. Paul Theroux begins as the earnest acolyte, serving at the altar of an older and wiser and better writer. He remains for a good part of the early portions a happy *naif*, amazed yet impressed by the man he is delighted to call friend; after the death, by heart attack, of Shiva Naipaul, "it was," he writes, "as though I were the brother who survived." The first real turning point, we are told, comes only after Naipaul is knighted in 1990, when Theroux realizes that all these years he has served as a perfect squire to a very faulty lord.

It so happens we know a great deal about Theroux's own unpleasantness—not only from his brother Alexander but from the rather icily contemptuous self-portrait that emerges in many of his own travel books. Yet in regard to his friend Naipaul, we are asked to believe that Theroux's behavior is always honorable, moral, exemplary. A serious mistake, this—in literature as in life, imputing undiluted virtue to oneself is of course one of the first signs of falsity.

ACCORDING TO Theroux, "most writers are cranks, so friendship among them is rare, and they end up loners." This may be even truer when there is a discrepancy in the literary reputation of the two writers. Theroux reports that in 1967 Naipaul asked him, as a favor, to read the galley proof of his novel *The Mimic Men* for typographical errors. If that was Theroux's favor to Naipaul, then being permitted to read the novel, from which he claims

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to have learned much, was supposedly Naipaul's favor to him. But why does this not seem quite the "reciprocal" transaction Theroux thinks it is?

I once had a friendship with a famous American novelist—a man, as I would one day learn, with a genuine gift for intimacy and none whatsoever for friendship—who treated me to a similar favor: he read aloud to me from a novel in progress. And I did at the time consider it a favor, though what I really felt, I now realize, was flattery at being thought perceptive enough to make this exercise worth his while. As for him, from my reactions he gained, aside from the occasional minor correction, perhaps a slightly stronger sense of what in his novel worked well and what did not. Again, who here was doing the favor for whom?

It is all too natural for the lesser party in such a friendship to get this element of power askew—which is why it can be so dismaying to learn how unimportant one's friendship is to the more powerful party. My friendship with the novelist fell apart when he attributed to me an opinion about his work that I had never held. Paul Theroux's friendship fell apart at the end because of a woman, Naipaul's new wife, who rebuffed him—or perhaps really when he learned that Naipaul had consigned autographed copies of Theroux's books to a bookseller. When something like this happens, when one realizes how much a friendship has meant to oneself and how little to the other person, one feels a double damn fool, and one's resentment soon leads one to seek revenge. I tried to kill my man in a short story. Theroux, having had a much longer putative friendship and more vehement feelings about its sad conclusion, has allowed himself a full 288 pages for the job.

"The melancholy thing about the world," V. S. Naipaul once told Paul Theroux, "is that it is full of stupid and common people, and the world is run for the benefit of the stupid and the common." Perhaps so. But after reading *Sir Vidia's Shadow*, one feels that in the end this arrangement may well be for the best.

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Justice for Pinochet?

Elliott Abrams

THE ATTEMPT by a judge in Spain to extradite Chile's former dictator Augusto Pinochet from England and try him in Madrid—a ruling on the extradition request may have come down by the time this article appears—has stirred a fair amount of controversy. Although the episode seems to have caught many people by surprise, it nevertheless fits two developing patterns.

The broader of the two patterns is the effort, no doubt spurred by this century's imminent end, to revisit some of its lowest points and, in effect, straighten things out. Thus, the Japanese have been asked to apologize for their conduct in China and Korea in the 1930's and 1940's, the Swiss have agreed to make restitution for assets deposited by Jews in Swiss banks during the Nazi era, the United States has apologized for the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, and the Vatican has revisited the sorry record of Christian anti-Semitism. Dealing with periods closer to hand, "truth commissions" in Latin America and South Africa have tried to pry facts out of reluctant witnesses and to expose secrets buried beneath layers of lies.

The second, narrower, pattern has less to do with establishing the historical truth, or even with compensating victims, than with retribution. This is the effort to assert universal jurisdiction over serious human-rights violations so that judges anywhere can seize, try, and punish officials and former officials wherever they may be found. Thus, when General Pinochet, now eighty-three and out of power for a decade, was in London for medical treatment last October, a single Spanish judge, Baltasar Garzón, persuaded the British to detain him so that he could be delivered to Spain for trial under international law for torture, murder, and other crimes. Human-rights activists around the world have applauded this action, as they applauded the establishment last year of an International Criminal Court (whose jurisdiction the United States has thus far refused to accept).*

The two efforts—to reveal the secrets, and to punish the guilty—are linked: to those promoting them, the horrors of the past can be avoided in the future if we make it easier to hold those responsible to account. Universal criminal jurisdiction is, in this view, the best deterrent to tomorrow's official crimes.

Reality is, alas, more complex. For one thing, as some commentators on the Pinochet case have already pointed out, the urge to know the truth has been only selectively exercised, and the urge to punish no less so: no one, at least in the human-rights community, has so far called for the seizure and trial of Fidel Castro, who killed many more people than Pinochet (and, as historical irony

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* See "Against an International Criminal Court" by Lee A. Casey and David B. Rivkin, Jr. in the May 1998 COMMENTARY.

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would have it, was on an official visit to Spain at the moment the general was detained in London), or Yasir Arafat, who deliberately targeted innocent civilians. That aside, there is also the question of efficacy: the Nuremberg trials of Nazi officials, held in the immediate aftermath of World War II, and themselves deeply flawed by the participation of the USSR, hardly prevented acts of genocide during the ensuing half-century. Finally, and most importantly, there are real dangers in proclaiming that any judge, anywhere, may try any former official. The desire to straighten things out soon confronts the fact that truth, justice, reconciliation, and democracy are sometimes mutually exclusive.

THE IMMEDIATE question in the Pinochet case is extradition to Spain. But whatever the ruling on this question by Britain's law lords, the case itself is bound to remain a matter of contention, and the issues raised by it are hardly likely to disappear. It is therefore worth beginning with a bare recitation of the relevant history.

In 1973, Chile was bitterly divided between partisans of President Salvador Allende, a leftist who had been elected by a minority of Chile's voters in a three-way race, and the large body of Chileans unhappy with the Marxist-Leninist direction of his government. The Chilean army staged a coup d'état that had strong popular backing, and then proceeded to rule the country for sixteen years. During those years, the military, under General (soon President) Pinochet, undertook economic reforms that were widely admired, and at all times maintained a decent degree of public support: at the end, in a plebiscite in which Chileans were asked whether Pinochet should continue to rule, fully 43 percent voted for him. But that sixteen-year period was also marked by gross human-rights violations ranging from press censorship to torture and murder of the regime's opponents.

After Pinochet lost the 1988 plebiscite, and then the election that followed it, a democratic government came into office. Among its unenviable tasks was that of dealing with the crimes of the period just past. In this, it was not alone in Latin America: Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, among other countries, have also faced the problem of human-rights abuses under prior military dictatorships.

Broadly speaking, all of these countries have come to a similar conclusion. It is the same conclusion that, as it happens, Spain itself reached when it emerged from 40 years of dictatorship under Francisco Franco; that South Africa reached when its democratic government undertook to investigate the apartheid years; and that the democratic governments of the old Soviet-bloc nations reached in dealing with the massive crimes of the Communist era.

None of these nations has held mass trials. In some, including South Africa and El Salvador, "truth commissions" have functioned as substitutes for such trials. The commissions have been charged with finding out what happened—who was killed and tortured, who ordered the killing and torturing; and a few individuals have been jailed. But the "security forces"—that is, the former police and military officers—have for the most part been left alone.

A number of Latin American countries have gone further, proclaiming actual amnesties and thereby putting into law their decision not to prosecute. In Uruguay, such an amnesty was made the subject of a popular referendum, and passed. In Argentina, the amnesty was negotiated between the elected government and the military high command; only a handful of officers were prosecuted. In Chile, the amnesty, which of course covered Pinochet as well as others, was agreed upon between the exiting army and the incoming democrats.

Why have these new democratic regimes not sought perfect justice? Why have they allowed the crimes of the past to be buried, or at least to go unpunished? I well recall the response of a very high Argentine official to whom I put that question in the late 1980's when I was serving in the State Department. "You Americans don't really understand," he said. "You never think that one may have to choose between democracy and justice. It does not occur to you. But that is our choice, and we choose democracy."

The Argentine official may have had several things in mind. He may have meant that his country's democracy, new and fragile as it was, might physically not survive an effort to punish everyone in uniform who had been involved in human-rights abuses; indeed, during this very period there were several attempted coups against the new government. Or perhaps he was alluding to the threat of blackmail: the military, after all, was an assiduous keeper of secrets. Or perhaps the Argentine military had already exacted a promise not to prosecute, as its price for leaving power and staying out of it.

Or maybe he meant something else entirely: that democracy requires consensus, and consensus in the present case had to be built through national reconciliation. A thorough process of investigation would perforce examine the conduct not only of military officers but of bureaucrats and journalists,

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shopkeepers, neighbors, brothers, husbands, wives. The results could tear democracy asunder. So the Argentine decision to forgo "justice" was not something decided as it were under the gun, but out of well-founded regard for the democratic future of the country. This seems to be the point arrived at as well by formerly Communist countries like Poland and the Czech Republic, not to mention Spain, where there has never been a trial of a Franco-era official, and no "truth commission."

The lesson for the Pinochet case is plain. Whatever the abstract rights and wrongs of a decision to prosecute, that decision is for no one to make but the country involved. How can an American tell Brazilians or Czechs or South Africans or citizens of any other democracy precisely where to find the right balance? As they and not we lived with the circumstances of oppression, so not we but they will live with the consequences of a trial. It goes without saying that foreigners, especially well-wishers, have every right to weigh and to assess, to urge, cajole, advise, criticize, and endorse. But literally to judge?

IN THE Pinochet case, the people of Chile made their intentions plain. But for the Spanish judge, and all those who have cheered his action, that is not good enough. Whatever arrangement the Chileans may have made among themselves, they say, it does not bind *us*. Justice must be done, and the doing of it will best deter any such crimes in the future.

One wonders. Speaking pragmatically, we can grant that it must surely weigh on the mind of a prospective human-rights abuser that, for the rest of his life, he will be vulnerable to seizure and prosecution wherever he goes. But what would such knowledge impel him to do—refrain from abuses, or resolve to stay in power at all costs, dying with the presidential sash across his chest? Having negotiated with several dictators concerning their departure from power, I can vouch for the fact that future safety is indeed one of their major preoccupations. If they are unsure of it, will they not hang on until the last bloody moment?

Ironically enough, what goes for presidents also goes for their enemies in the revolutionary camp. Early this year, negotiations opened between Colombia's new president and guerrilla groups engaged in a bloody, decades-long conflict that both promotes and is fueled by drug trafficking. For obvious reasons, it is in the interests of the United States—not to speak of the far greater interests of Colombians—that this conflict end on reasonable terms. For it to do so, however, the guerrillas will unquestionably need some assurances about their future: they are hardly going to lay down their arms knowing they might then be seized and jailed. Some form of amnesty must be negotiated, as it was when another Colombian group, the M-19 guerrillas, disarmed after peace negotiations in 1990. Will the extradition of Augusto Pinochet to Spain make it easier or harder to reach such a settlement?

At stake here are issues that go far beyond pragmatism, or the question of which tactics are likely to be more conducive to social peace. For more than three centuries, world politics has been organized as a system of nation-states with nearly exclusive jurisdiction both over their own citizens and over persons committing crimes within their borders. This system provided not only a workable set of rules that helped avoid war between states but real protections for the individual citizen. An American knew that (unless he committed crimes on foreign soil) only an American court could try him; this meant that if he ever did face prosecution, it would be under the panoply of rights and protections afforded by American law. He could not, for example, be prosecuted in a Libyan court for acts he was accused of committing in America—or, indeed, in France.

There was an exception, but one that proved the rule. Criminals who lay beyond the jurisdiction of any state were open for attack or prosecution by any state that could get its hands on them. These were the pirates, who from Roman times into the 19th century were subject to a form of universal jurisdiction. As it happens, there are true, modern-day analogues of pirates—that is to say, evildoers who are beyond the control of any government. I am referring of course to international terrorists. As in the case of pirates, the state that punishes a terrorist is acting on behalf of all states—for all are pledged to fight terrorism—and is vindicating common values and interests. States have an especially clear right to punish persons who commit acts of terrorism on their soil, and, by extension, those who order such acts.

TO ANYONE who has followed my argument thus far, it must be obvious that Pinochet does not fall under the category of terrorist, and that, in seeking to try him for acts committed in Chile and covered by the Chilean amnesty, the Spanish judge has acted in a far-fetched and dangerous fashion—I would go so far as to say a piratical fashion. But I must enter a qualifier.

In 1976, in downtown Washington, D.C., a bomb killed Orlando Letelier, a former Chilean

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ambassador to the United States who had been a staunch supporter of Salvador Allende, the president whom Pinochet overthrew, and an active opponent of Pinochet's regime. Letelier's car was blown up, and both he and his American passenger died. The then-head of the Chilean secret police was later convicted, in Chile, of having ordered this act, and those who actually planted the bomb in Washington were convicted in a U.S. court.

The unresolved question was whether General Pinochet, to whom the secret police reported, ordered the killing. Only recently, the U.S. Attorney who prosecuted this case, Lawrence Barcella, suggested that our government review the evidence and seek to extradite Pinochet. Here, my own strong reservations about the promiscuous misuse of universal jurisdiction are eclipsed by what I would call the terrorism exception. If credible grounds do exist for believing that Pinochet ordered a murder in Washington, D.C., then our judicial system clearly has the authority to seek his extradition in order to try him. Perhaps he is innocent; or perhaps he cannot be proved guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. But we have the legal right to find out.

THAT DOES not mean, however, that prudential considerations should be put aside even in such a case. For the decision to pursue a former official of another government is a matter of the utmost gravity. Whatever the flaws of the Nuremberg trials, bringing Nazi leaders to justice for war crimes and crimes against humanity was, in addition to a moral imperative, an act of state, a political decision taken jointly by the Allied governments. So was the more recent decision to hunt down alleged war criminals in the Balkans. So should have been, and so should still be, any decision to seek the extradition of General Pinochet. Yet no government, including Spain's, has ever approached the government of either Chile or Britain to ask for custody of the general. The entire matter is the work of a single Spanish judge, whose grasp of the possible consequences—for Chilean political life, for relations between Spain and Chile and Britain and Chile, or for the efforts by other societies to quiet their own internal demons—may be feeble, or who may think such consequences irrelevant to the pursuit of "justice."

They are not. Binding up a nation's wounds, to use Lincoln's language at the end of our country's Civil War, is the task before any nation emerging from division, bloodshed, or oppression. Within such a society, peace and national reconciliation—and democracy itself—may at times be more pressing goals than justice; the rules of life in the history of a nation are far more complex than the rules of the courtroom.

The proper ordering or balancing of these ends has been the work of statesmen and of democratic political leaders—of the Washingtons and the Lincolns, the Gandhis and the Mandelas, the Havels and the de Gaulles, when we have been lucky enough to find them. Today, it is for the people who are now rebuilding from the ruins to decide how they intend to balance the claims of history and the demands of justice, and to say when the need to bind up wounds should take precedence over filling the jails.

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Love of Woman and Love of God: The Case of Jacob

Leon R. Kass

According to the dominant religious teachings of the West, love is the very heart of piety: the preeminent Christian virtue is charity, love of neighbor, in imitation of God's love for man. And Jews are commanded, in the Torah, to "love your neighbor as yourself" and to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."

But precisely because one is commanded to love the Lord, and with all one's heart, the ordinary, natural loves that human beings experience for one another emerge as a possible problem. By natural human love I do not mean the generalized love of neighbor, commanded as an ethical ideal. Rather, I mean what the Greeks called *eros*, that overpowering desire that fixes the soul of the lover steadfastly on his beloved. Falling in love, being filled with images and thoughts of the one beloved, seeking always his or her presence, longing for unification in body and in soul with the one we love—this is erotic love (which, we need today to be reminded, is something vastly more exalted than "having sex" or "being in a relationship"). The question is this: is falling and being in love good for piety?

In Greek thought and literature, we sometimes find a close connection between the two. Aphrodite, who inspires or gives birth to *eros*, is herself a goddess of considerable power and influence; tragic is the lot of those who, like Hippolytos, fail to pay her homage. In the only Platonic dialogue explicitly devoted to a god, the *Symposium*, six members of the Athenian intellectual elite make speeches in praise of the god Eros. In the famous image of the ladder of love, Socrates (and/or Diotima) presents *eros* as a power pointed upward, ultimately drawn by and directed toward the eternal and highest being, the beautiful itself. On this account, earthly *eros*, properly directed, is or becomes love of the divine.

Is the same thing true for biblical piety? Is falling in love good for being a Christian or a Jew—for being a person of the Book, for following the commandments, for loving and revering and imitating God?

Biblical instruction on these (and many other) matters is conveyed mainly through stories. Among the best stories for considering the question of *eros* and piety are those concerning the patriarch Jacob. The portrait of him is richer and more complex than that of anyone else in Genesis, and his life occupies fully half of its 50 chapters. More important, Jacob is the first biblical character who, quite explicitly, falls in love. And Jacob famously comes to bear the name of his people, Israel, a name he earns because of his

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striving with God. What, then, is the connection between Jacob as lover and Jacob as Israel?

When we first come upon the figure of Jacob, he hardly seems a pious or God-fearing man. On the contrary, he is a self-absorbed and self-reliant fellow, one who trusts mainly in his own cleverness. True, unlike Esau, who treats it with contempt, Jacob is keenly interested in the birthright: the rights and privileges belonging to the first-born as future replacement for his father Isaac as head of the family. But, though for this reason clearly superior to his older brother, Jacob is not yet fit for the covenant, and it seems likely that he is interested more in the privileges that attach to the birthright (gain and honor) than in its obligations (spiritual and moral leadership).

Jacob believes, mistakenly, that he can solve the birth-order problem by himself, and that he can do so without his father's knowledge by his cleverness alone (the sale of the birthright for a bowl of pottage). But if one has no reverence for one's father, how can one feel reverence for God? And how can one be a true heir of the way of Abraham if one relies solely on one's own cleverness? Even after Rebecca compels Jacob to seek his father's blessing, he reveals his lack of piety in doing so: asked by the bewildered old man how he has been able to provide savory food so quickly, Jacob answers, "Because the Lord *your* God caused it to happen for me." In this first and only time Jacob speaks of God, he does not acknowledge Him as his own.

As little as he is inclined to piety, Jacob is no more inclined to love. Esau, his twin brother, at age forty takes two wives. But Jacob shows no apparent interest in women. He is content at home, self-sufficient in his own cleverness and happy in his mother Rebecca's love. Only after the episode in which he deceives his dim-eyed father into giving him the blessing intended for Esau is Jacob at long last forced to leave home.

Sent off to seek a wife, Jacob goes empty-handed, trusting only to his wits. But the self-reliant and clever fellow will soon learn the limits of cleverness and self-reliance. Though he owns the birthright he has purchased and the blessing he has stolen, he has nothing to show for either. He has good reason to be perplexed about just what it could mean for him to be the blessed heir of his father.

As he nears the border of Haran, the place to which Abraham had long ago sent his servant Eliezer in search of a suitable wife for Isaac, and to which Isaac had in turn commanded him to go to find a wife "from among the daughters" of Rebecca's brother Laban, Jacob feels his own insufficiency. That night, at Beth-El, he has the sublime dream-vision of the angels and the ladder, a dream in which God addresses him personally, blesses him with the promise of land and progeny, and offers him a personal warrant of divine protection and faithfulness.

Awakened by the dream, Jacob makes a remarkable response: "And he said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, but I knew it not.'" By an act of mind, Jacob "sees," through the dream, to the presence of the absent God, and he is filled with awe, the fundamental religious passion: "And he was afraid, and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is nothing but the house of God and this is the gate of heaven.'" When he awakens for good, early in the morning, Jacob erects as a pillar the stone on which he slept and anoints it with oil.

But with daylight Jacob's circumspection returns. He vows the Bible's first vow, but its character reflects the calculating character of its maker:

> *If* God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, *then* shall the Lord be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee. [Emphasis added.]

It is hard to know what to make of the vow's conditional character. But I am inclined to think that Jacob is hedging his bets. When the sun shines, Jacob is still Jacob the shrewd, the calculating, the self-reliant: Will God be able to deliver His promises? Am I right to trust dream-promises? What if they are mere projections of my own wishes? Jacob's opening to the divine is not yet wholehearted.

Nonetheless, encouraged by his dream, "Jacob lifted up his legs and came to the land of the children of the East." Thus begins the account of what will be his twenty-year sojourn outside of Canaan, at the home of his uncle Laban. During this twenty-year period, God will not speak to him, nor will Jacob be moved to seek contact with God. Not piety, it seems, but another soul-opening passion will rule his soul: *eros*. Whether and how this passion and his adventures in Paddan-Aram contribute to his education for leadership in God's new way remains to be seen.

Jacob, sharp-eyed, looks out and sees a well, three flocks of sheep lying around it, and a great stone covering the well-mouth. Local custom had it that when all the flocks were gathered, the

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men would collectively roll the stone from the well's mouth, draw water for the sheep, and replace the stone. Jacob himself had just recently set up a stone in its now special place, giving it a custom-made meaning. How will he deal with this great stone?

Understandably unsure of where he is, Jacob interrogates the shepherds and learns that he has indeed arrived at Haran, that the men know Laban his uncle, and that all is well with him. "Look, Rachel, his daughter, is just now coming with the sheep." What good luck! Perhaps the blessing was not an empty promise! It does not occur to Jacob, faultily remembering Isaac's injunction, that Laban could have many such daughters.

So as to be alone with Rachel, Jacob immediately tries to send the men away: "Water your sheep and go feed them." But the men refuse to go: "We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered and they roll the stone from the well's mouth, for [only] then do we water the sheep." In the midst of this conversation, Rachel arrives, and Jacob seizes the occasion:

> And it happened, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban, his mother's brother, that Jacob drew near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban, his mother's brother. And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

Jacob, sharp-eyed, sees Rachel and at the same time sees also the flock. No stranger to the love of gain, he may be as attracted by the one as by the other. In any case, the sheep's need for water provides him with a golden opportunity to make an impression on the lady. Inspired by the sight of Rachel, Jacob, in a display of heroic strength, moves the great stone all by himself—"a stone that no ten men today could budge"—and hastens generously to draw water for her flock.

It is a golden moment—a moment of vigor, daring, and kindness. What woman would not be impressed? But the careful reader notices that, in his great deed with the stone, Jacob has defied the local custom. For Jacob, the stone is but a stone, an obstacle to life-giving water, a vehicle for showing his prowess. But in Haran, the stone is the embodiment of custom, of the mores of the community that in fact protect the life of all its members. Jacob the deviser, the man who rejected the customary rule of the first-born, has never been a man who defers much to custom. Neither is any other man in love. Jacob in love is likely to be doubly antinomian, doubly indifferent to law and custom.

Jacob's boldness with the stone is matched by his boldness with the woman. The flock he waters, but the woman he kisses. To protect Jacob's reputation, commentators have been at pains to insist that this was a genteel kiss, a sign of respect or familial affection. But it is bold in any case, and, considered as a sequel to his superhuman heroics with the stone, it looks to be love-inspired. He kisses Rachel even before speaking to her. In fact, we have here the only instance in biblical narrative in which a man kisses a woman who is neither his wife nor his mother. Jacob acts on strong and immediate passion, and Rachel allows it. Only after the kiss (and the weeping) does Jacob speak, identifying himself as her father's kin and as Rebecca's son. Rachel, who has apparently remained speechless, runs home to tell her father.

Uncle Laban is, in his own right, not reticent. He rushes out to meet Jacob, embraces and kisses him, and brings him home. In the house, Jacob recounts to Laban his whole story, including his deception of his father. Hearing the tale, Laban exclaims with gusto, "You are surely my bone and my flesh," affirming kinship not only in blood but perhaps also in character: fellow deceiver.* The hidden warning is lost on Jacob, who moves in with his uncle.

AFTER A month or so, Laban proposes that Jacob be paid for his service. In naming a wage, Jacob agrees de facto to become his uncle's hireling, unaware that blood and business make bad bedfellows. In fact, Jacob intends to turn service into kinship, by working to earn the hand of his beloved.

But things are not going to be so easy. Laban, we are now told, has two daughters, not just one. The elder, Leah (her name can mean "cow," "strong woman," or "mistress," or, alternatively, "weary," from a root meaning "to tire," "to be or make disgusted"), is described as having weak or soft or tender eyes; the younger, Rachel (her name means "ewe-lamb"), is said to be "of beautiful form and beautiful to see." Attention is called to Leah's eyes and Rachel's looks, and therewith to the difference between the invisible soul and the visible surface.

Visible beauty is strikingly obvious; at its extreme, it can be blinding, preventing the viewer from even looking for signs of the soul. The beautiful look conveys wholeness and self-sufficiency, and advertises its bearer as self-evidently good. Indeed, so confident are we in the reliability of the beautiful that we rarely wonder whether it adver-

* I owe this observation to Eric Lavoie.

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tises itself truly. In contrast, we somehow know that it is less easy to read the soul, a truth mirrored for us in the biblical text by the difficulty in deciphering the description given of Leah's eyes. Do they reveal her to be weak, or tender? Is she the maternal, nurturing, or householdly sort? Could she be more discerning, a better "looker" than her better-looking sister? However suggestively the text might invite such thoughts, it surely forces *us* to look searchingly into her eyes and into what lies behind them and within. But Jacob has eyes only for Rachel; he is smitten by her visible beauty.

The mention of Rachel's beauty is immediately followed by the declaration of Jacob's love—no great surprise, inasmuch as *eros* is born through the eyes and begins from the looks:

> And Jacob loved Rachel; and he said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter."

It may seem worse than strange to modern readers that a lover would willingly demean his beloved by regarding her as wages. But we should not judge hastily. Jacob is in a very weak position: an exile and refugee, without possessions or prospects, he could have no other hope for arranging the match. To gain her father's consent, he could offer only himself and his devoted service, and Laban appears to accept the stated wage:

> "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Dwell with me."

Notice that Laban does not exactly say yes. "Better to you than to another" is fully compatible with "best to no one." Laban, who seems also to have preferred his more beautiful daughter, may indeed have been reluctant to give her to anyone. Also, as we shall see, he may have other considerations that will get in the way of the straightforward agreement as Jacob proposed it. But Jacob thinks he has a bargain, and is simply delighted with it.

> And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they were in his eyes like but a few days because of his love for her.

This is, for me, one of the most beautiful sentences of the entire book. No poet has spoken better of love's power to inspire devotion, to lighten hardships, and to defy the ordinary course of time. Yet seven years are *not* a few days; what appears to Jacob's eyes is, in this case, an illusion caused by love. We are forced to wonder whether the promise of Rachel's beauty, also delivered to his eyes, is not similarly illusory. Especially in this story about deceivers and deceiving, we should beware of letting our own romantic beliefs blind us to the question of where the deception really occurs. Jacob loves Rachel—and so do most of us with him. But does God share this preference? Does God think that seeing is reliable or that beauty is trustworthy? If He does not, should we perhaps reconsider? These questions naturally force themselves on the reader who is not himself (actually or vicariously) blinded by the love of the beautiful.

When the seven years have expired, Jacob claims his wages: "Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her." Jacob's love of the beautiful Rachel is hardly Platonic; sexual desire for her fills his soul—not surprisingly, after seven years of longing. Laban responds by gathering all the men of the place and making a wedding feast. But, under cover of night, Laban takes his elder daughter Leah, no doubt suitably veiled as a bride, and brings her to Jacob, who goes in unto her. But it came to pass, in the morning: "Behold! It was Leah!" Jacob, the sharp-eyed, has been tricked in the dark regarding sisters, just as he had previously deceived his dim-sighted father regarding brothers—a clear case of fitting retribution.

But how did it happen? It was, of course, dark, and the woman's face was covered. Moreover, Jacob was quite possibly drunk, after a full day of feasting, and in addition he may have been blinded by lust. But, given its local context, the story offers a powerfully ironic comment on the love of visible beauty, and shows as well the unreliability of trusting alone to sight. Jacob, with stars in his eyes, is shown here to be blinded, not necessarily by lust or drink but by the love of the beautiful itself. And whereas his dim-sighted father Isaac, in *his* deception, had available to him a reliable sense, namely, hearing—"the voice is the voice of Jacob"—Jacob and Leah's love-making presumably took place in silence.

As it happens, there is a midrash, a rabbinic homily, to the contrary. According to it, Rachel—who had to have participated in the switching, at least by acquiescence—is present during the entire affair, speaking from beneath the bed to perpetuate the deception, and, primarily, to keep her sister from being exposed and humiliated: the hands are the hands of Leah, but the voice is the voice of Rachel. Indeed, for this self-sacrificing and generous behavior, the ancient rabbis greatly extolled Rachel's character, adding that she allowed Leah to take her place not only to save Leah from having to

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marry Esau, for whom, as eldest, she was intended, but also because she herself knew that Leah would be the better wife and mother for her beloved Jacob.* But all of this (extra-textual) commentary only serves to highlight how much the text itself leaves dark.

In any event, though we sense the justice in the trickster being tricked, we are also inclined to share Jacob's bewilderment and indignation:

> "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Then why have you beguiled [or "betrayed"] me?"

But Uncle Laban has an answer, which carries moral force—with us and especially with Jacob:

> "It is not done thus in our place to give the younger before the first-born."

Laban, perhaps speaking better than he knows, implicitly rebukes Jacob as a defier of custom, as one who ignores the claims of the natural birth order: pointedly, he does not say "the younger before the elder" but "before the *first-born*," using a word cognate with "the birthright," the right of the first-born son. Jacob must hear and feel these rebukes, at least to some extent. And so, when Laban adds immediately that, if Jacob does not repudiate this marriage to Leah, "we will give you also the other one" after the bridal week, Jacob offers no protest, not even over the condition that he must afterward serve Laban another seven years to "pay" for Rachel.

To be sure, Jacob's position is weak; he is alone, without power, and under Laban's thumb. And, because he still wants Rachel and can enjoy her in only one more week, he has little choice but to submit. Jacob will later harbor a deep grievance against Laban for his double-dealing. Yet, at this moment, clever Jacob must surely have registered the telling criticism Laban implicitly makes of him. Cleverness and self-reliance have been partly humbled, all thanks to love.

THE DOUBLE-MARRIAGE does not change Jacob's love for Rachel. On the contrary, "he loved Rachel more than Leah." Such preference, probably unavoidable in any bigamous marriage, promises trouble in the house. In the present case, it also raises questions about the basis of the preference, and whether, from the point of view of both marriage itself and of God's new way that was begun with Abraham, Jacob's preference is to be applauded. Jacob loved Rachel more, but was Rachel more lovable? What, besides her beauty, recommends her? However much we might be partial to love and lovers, erotic love of the sort Jacob felt for Rachel may *not* be the best foundation for marriage and family life—especially if they are to be informed by God's covenant with Abraham and his seed, with its emphasis on righteousness. For *eros* for the beautiful is one thing, parenthood and perpetuation another.

As we learn in the immediate sequel, God Himself upholds this distinction, weighing in on the side of procreation and thus, implicitly, *against* nongenerative love:

> And the Lord saw that Leah was hated, and he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.

Even if God does not simply favor Leah over Rachel, even if He is only compensating Leah out of pity for her being unloved, His intervention highlights for us the tension between love and generation. Jacob has one wife for love, one wife for children. It seems as if the love of the beautiful is, by itself, sterile. And Leah, who bears Jacob four sons in quick succession, seems to justify God's gracing her with offspring. For in naming her sons—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah—she three times (out of four) makes reference to the Lord, a fact all the more remarkable because the Lord was not the god of her father or his household.

In becoming Jacob's wife, Leah has fully and quickly accepted Jacob's God. Indeed, she speaks of God much more than does Jacob himself. True, in the naming of her first three sons, Leah refers also to her affliction and to her hope that her husband will now love her because she has borne him sons. But, in naming Judah, she says simply, gratefully, and piously, "This time I will praise [*hodah*] the Lord." Eventually, it will be Judah who, praise the Lord, rises to political leadership in the house of Israel. In addition, it is the tribe of Levi—Leah's third son—that will carry out the priestly functions. Religiously (through Levi) and politically (through Judah), the leadership of Israel will belong to the sons of Leah, the unloved because unbeautiful wife.

Rachel herself is not content to be only the preferred wife and Jacob's beloved; she too wants to bear children. Her distress is entirely understandable, and entirely natural. Moreover, Rachel's barrenness is made the more painful by her sister's extraordinary fertility. Yet the text does not mention her sadness or her frustration, but only her envy: "And when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister." Driven by envy, Rachel petulantly confronts Jacob. Here is the

* All this and much more in praise of Rachel is to be found in a beautiful book, *Rachel*, by Samuel H. Dresner (1994).

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Bible's only recorded conversation between them:

> And she said unto Jacob, "Give me children or else I die!" And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?" And she said, "Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; that she may bear upon my knees, and I may be built up, even I, through her." And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife; and Jacob went in unto her. And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.

Not only is love apparently not enough, it is not even secure as love. Rachel first implies that a life without children is not worth living, and here we may sympathize with her. But her desire to be built up indicates that she is moved (also? instead?) by other than maternal impulses. Rachel, the outwardly beautiful, is inwardly consumed by the ugly green monster. Ugly, too, is her demanding, not to say hysterical, speech.

But Jacob's response is much worse. His love turns to anger, as he sternly rebukes her with a rejoinder that is, at best, only superficially pious: why are you blaming me, when it is God's fault? Jacob seems utterly uncomprehending of the depth of his wife's womanly need. One even suspects he is not interested in children, at least not from his beautiful wife. Those who love the beautiful want the beautiful to remain unchangingly and forever the same ("seven years . . . like a few days"), and also to remain undividedly theirs: on both counts, pregnancy and motherhood are threatening.* Jacob certainly does not turn to God as his father had done under similar circumstances—"And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren"—a deed to which Jacob in fact owes his very existence. Instead, to please his wife, he accepts the dubious expedient of providing Rachel an adoptable child through a surrogate, a practice that had proved disastrous when the beautiful Sarah induced Abraham to get her a child through Hagar.

Sure enough, household tensions spiral as a result. Bilhah produces two sons—named, by Rachel, Dan, "he judged," because "God has judged and also heard my voice and given to me a son," and Naphtali, "wrestlings," because "with wrestlings of God have I wrestled with my sister, and prevailed." Not to be outdone, Leah now enters her handmaid Zilpah into the competition; and she bears Jacob two sons, Gad and Asher. The rivalry then reaches its pathetic height in the episode with the mandrakes.

Reuben, Leah's first-born, has found mandrakes and brought them to his mother, who presumably intends to make use of their aphrodisiac powers to win back her husband's attention. When Rachel begs for a share, Leah complains, "Is it a small matter that you have taken my husband? And now [you would take] also my son's mandrakes?" Rachel makes Leah an ugly offer, but one she cannot refuse: Jacob for tonight in exchange for the mandrakes.† Leah accepts and, in an act at once triumphant and self-debasing, tells Jacob, "Thou must come in unto me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes."

Rachel may have the mandrakes, but fertility remains with the Lord: "And God hearkened unto Leah . . . and she bore Jacob a fifth son," Issachar, and also, soon, a sixth, Zebulun. Leah believes, and repeatedly says, that her husband should dwell with her, because she is the fertile source of his children. For Leah, wifeliness means mainly motherhood, not self-satisfied *eros*: a view God Himself appears to support.

After Leah completes her childbearing with Dinah, God at last remembers Rachel and opens her womb. At the birth of her son, Rachel joyously exults: "God has taken away [*'asaph*] my disgrace"; yet, not content with this one blessing, and still in competition with her sister, she names him Joseph (*yoseph*), saying, "May the Lord add [*yoseph*] to me another son." It is doubtful whether Rachel truly understands or accepts the truth she herself utters, that it is the Lord Who adds and the Lord Who takes away.

THE TALE of the birth of Jacob's children is now complete (save for the tragic birth of Benjamin years later), and we may pause to take stock. Rivalry between the sisters has sown deep enmity in the household—though, one must add in fairness, it is also responsible for the abundant growth of Jacob's clan. Thanks to the competition between the wives, God's new way will go from household to incipient nation in just one generation. The blame for the competition lies not with Jacob but with Laban and his deception; but Jacob contributes to his own deception, just as the appetitive Esau and Isaac had contributed to theirs.

What made Jacob vulnerable to deception—and what is the root cause of this situation—was *eros*,

* In a parallel story that opens the book of Samuel, Elkanah answers his preferred but barren wife, Hannah, "Why is thy heart grieved? Am I not better to thee than ten sons?" This speech is much more beautiful and comforting than Jacob's, but Elkanah too seems unaware of, or perhaps indifferent to, the maternal impulse in his favorite wife.

† The ugly character of this sisterly exchange recalls the brotherly exchange between Jacob and Esau over the swapping of the birthright for a mess of pottage.

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his love for the beautiful Rachel. Love opened the soul of this previously self-centered and self-serving man, bringing him to attention and inspiring devotion. As a result of investing his heart in someone other than himself, Jacob has become more educable. But this is not, as the Greeks might have it, because the beautiful is the skin of the good, or because *eros* points one to the divine. On the contrary, Jacob as lover is open to education because love has made him vulnerable to suffering, has prepared him to recognize the limits of his own powers and understanding.

Jacob's is a love whose wisdom is called into question by the story of the sisters' rivalry and childbearing. The more life-giving, more humble, and more God-affirming spouse is shown to be Leah. In a point that will be emphasized in a later episode, love of the beautiful Rachel appears, instead, to resemble a form of idolatry.

AFTER TWENTY years with Laban, Jacob, now grown prosperous largely as a result of his clever genetic engineering of his flock, finds himself in a tight spot. Laban's sons accuse him of taking away their father's wealth, and Laban's own demeanor toward him has soured. Jacob is at a loss. At this crucial juncture, God speaks to him—indeed, speaks to him directly for the first time, now twenty years after his marvelous dream at Beth-El. God's speech is a precise answer to Jacob's deepest longings and apprehensions:

> And the Lord said unto Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers, and to your kindred, and I will be with you."

Thanks to God's speech, with its reassuring echo of the divine promise of his dream at Beth-El—"I am with you"—Jacob is moved to act. In a speech of great rhetorical cunning, he persuades his wives to leave their father's house, and, to avoid a confrontation, escapes with them when his father-in-law is absent. In contrast with his arrival at Paddan-Aram, alone and unaccommodated, he leaves as head of a large clan (two wives, two handmaid-concubines, twelve children between the ages of six and twelve, and many servants) and as a man of substance. Yet, despite his prosperity, he leaves as he came, in flight from mortal danger, relying on craftiness to outwit superior force.

In use of guile, Jacob unknowingly has a partner in his wife Rachel:

> Now Laban was gone to shear the sheep, so Rachel stole (*ganav*) the household idols (*teraphim*) that were her father's. And Jacob outwitted [literally, "stole (*ganav*) the heart (*lev*) of"] Laban the Aramean, in that he told him not that he was fleeing. So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up and passed over the River [Euphrates], and he set his face toward the mountain of Gilead.

Both Rachel and Jacob are said to engage in theft: she literally steals the *teraphim* of her father, he figuratively steals the heart of Laban by fleeing with his daughters and grandchildren, as well as by not telling him of his departure. But we notice that Laban is here identified neither as Jacob's father-in-law nor as his mother's brother but as "the Aramean." Jacob, who for twenty years has lived abroad, under Laban's roof and following Laban's Aramean customs, now returns on God's command to his father Isaac, seed of the covenant between God and Abraham and bearer of God's new way. Jacob's return—his stealing away—is thus described as not only a personal but also a cultural separation.

Not so for Rachel, for when she goes, she takes with her the household gods "of her father." The reason for this theft has been the subject of much conjecture. The most pious interpretation, which assumes Rachel's unswerving devotion to the God of Jacob, suggests that she took them to purify her father's house, ridding it of idol worship in a farewell gift to her father. Others, mindful of the use of such *teraphim* in divination, suggest that Rachel sought to deprive her father of the power to detect Jacob's whereabouts after he discovers the escape. But, on this interpretation, Rachel would not only need to share the Aramean belief in the power of such idols; she would also implicitly be expressing doubts about the ability of Jacob's God to preserve and protect her once she leaves home.

At the very least, one must consider that Rachel is here hedging her bet on Jacob's God. More likely, she still subscribes to the gods "that were her father's." Otherwise, why would she keep the *teraphim* close to her on her journey, rather than throwing them away as worthless objects? Rachel's secretive theft of, and attachment to, her father's *teraphim* will soon enough come back to haunt her and the entire household.

JACOB'S ATTEMPT to escape unnoticed does not succeed. Laban learns of Jacob's flight, pursues and catches him. He accuses Jacob of wrongdoing, deception, theft, and the coercive abduction of his daughters. Saving the most serious charge for the

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end, Laban finishes by surprising Jacob with a new outburst of angry and most serious accusation:

> "And now that you are surely gone, because you surely long for your father's house, why have you stolen my gods?!"

Bad as it may be to steal a man's sheep or cattle, his daughters and grandchildren, or even his "heart" and wits, far worse is it to steal his gods—even if one knows that his "gods" are in no way truly divine. Laban here has good reason to be angry.

Jacob defends himself vigorously, but in answering the charge of stealing Laban's gods, he rashly draws down a death sentence on the thief: "With whomever you find your gods, he shall not live; before our brothers, discern what of yours is with me and take it to you." To explain Jacob's reckless confidence, the narrator informs us that he did not know Rachel had stolen the *teraphim*. But, on a deeper level, we are invited to see that Jacob does not really know his beloved wife, and on the most important matter of how she stands in relation to the gods of her father. To say the least, her theft and continued possession of them place her and Jacob's entire family at grave risk.

Laban conducts a thorough search of all the tents but finds them not. Rachel has in fact hidden them close to her person, in the camel cushion or palanquin, and sits upon them all during the search of her tent. She explains her rude and unusual behavior to her father: "Let not my Lord take it badly that I am unable to rise before you, for the way of women is upon me." Knowing that Laban would not approach a woman in her time of menstrual impurity, and that he could not even conceive she would be sitting on the gods in that condition, Rachel prevents Laban from searching her or the cushion, and the *teraphim* are not found.

Many commentators have seen in Rachel's conduct a display of contempt for Laban's "gods." But they seem not to have considered the possibility that Rachel is not telling the truth about her condition. Someone who has stolen the "gods" of her father would not be above lying to prevent detection, especially when the thief has just been decreed a candidate for capital punishment. Besides, there would be poetic justice in Rachel's deceiving her father by lying about "the way of women," given that *he* had deceived Jacob regarding sexual matters and denied her the sole right to her lover's bed. Only by already assuming Rachel's integrity and piety toward the God of Abraham can one use this episode as evidence that Rachel was herself not attached to idols.

When Laban's search fails to uncover the *teraphim*, Jacob, now feeling completely vindicated, goes on the offensive. For the first time, he stands up to Laban face to face and as an equal. Concluding his defense, Jacob gives credit where credit is due:

> "Except that the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac were with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hand, and gave judgment last night."

Jacob, once inclined to think himself sufficient, now acknowledges God's providence and places himself voluntarily within the covenant made with his ancestors by the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac.

Jacob's turn toward God is greatly intensified by his next trial, the necessary encounter with his brother, Esau. The encounter itself need not detain us, but one point should be mentioned: beset by fear, Jacob the chronically self-reliant, now turns to prayer and approaches God for the first time. He concludes his supplication: "Deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and smite me, the mother upon the children." The jumbling of "me," "the mother," and "the children" may well be an expression of inchoate terror, but it is also Jacob's first clear identification of himself with his progeny.

To this point, we have seen his desire for the birthright, his love of Rachel, and his interest in the wealth of livestock. Though he has become the head of a sizable clan, this was the doing of his rivalrous wives, mostly of the one he did not love or want. His twelve children were all named by the women. Indeed, we have little if any evidence that he cared very much for the children. But here, with the prospect of death looming before him, suddenly the importance of his children rises vividly in his mind, even to the point of conflating his own being with theirs. Jacob, who once thought himself self-sufficient, now for the first time clearly sees himself as a link in the chain that connects fathers Abraham and Isaac to his own descendants. Recognition of mortality and concern for his posterity move Jacob closer to God.

After the famous nocturnal wrestling with the man-angel, the reunion and reconciliation with Esau, and the episode with Dinah and the men of Shechem, Jacob, on God's command, at last returns

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to Beth-El. God appears to him, renames him Israel, and pronounces on him the full Abrahamic blessing. This theophany and blessing represent the peak of Jacob's relationship to God; Jacob, now as Israel, now returned to the promised land, is firmly established in God's grace, having earned his place as a patriarch within the covenant. The birthright and the all-important covenantal blessing are now *rightly* his; we have it on the highest authority.

And yet, though his relationship with God is now solidly established, Jacob's human love is about to be destroyed. As the family heads south from Beth-El, toward Isaac's home in Hebron, Rachel gives birth a second time, this time tragically:

> And they journeyed from Beth-El, and there was still some way to come to Ephrath, when Rachel travailed and she had hard labor. And it happened, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, "Fear not; for this also is a son for you." And it came to pass, when her soul was departing—for she died—that she called his name Ben-Oni, but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and she was buried in the way to Ephrath (the same is Bethlehem). And Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave; the same is the pillar upon Rachel's grave unto this day.

The text preserves a delicate silence about Jacob's grief; though his sorrow for the loss of Rachel will be with him forever, we are not allowed to hear of it. Yet in the silence, we readers hear echoes of earlier speeches and remember earlier episodes. We recall how, in the immediate sequel to the first (dream) theophany at Beth-El, Jacob fell deeply in love at first sight with Rachel, in a love rooted in her physical beauty. Here, after the second (waking) theophany at Beth-El, Rachel's beauty vanishes with the departure of her soul. We remember, eerily, Rachel's demand for children ("give me children or I die") as well as her greedy and ungrateful speech at the birth of Joseph ("The Lord add [*yoseph*] to me another son"), a speech which endures as the meaning of Joseph's name. We remember especially the curse Jacob brought down unwittingly on Rachel, stealer of Laban's *teraphim*—"With whomsoever you find your gods, he shall not live"; even if Jacob never learned that Rachel was the thief, we fear that his bold words may just now have produced their effect. And we see Jacob, grief-stricken or not, reject the name Rachel on her deathbed chooses for Benjamin—not "son of my sorrow" but "son of my right hand"; this is the first of Jacob's twelve sons who will bear a name given to him by his father.

Finally, we note that Rachel is buried on the road, alone and separated from the sacred burial site of the matriarchs and patriarchs in the cave at Machpelah, resting place of couples Sarah and Abraham, Isaac and Rebecca, the place where Jacob will later bury Leah and will himself also come to lie. To be sure, Rachel's Tomb will become one of the Jewish "holy places"; it was a famous landmark already by the time of the prophet Samuel, and it has been a place of pilgrimage for Jews for centuries. Yet here, in the biblical text itself, Rachel in her death seems to be pushed to the side, if not from Jacob's heart, then from the people of the new way.

RACHEL ALONE of Jacob's entourage from Paddan-Aram does not return to Isaac's home; when Jacob comes back, at last, having fulfilled his father's charge to "take a wife . . . of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother," the wife he will be seen to have chosen will be Leah. We exaggerate, but in the direction of the truth, if we suggest that Jacob's entering fully into God's covenant and stepping forward into the place of his forefathers is finally incompatible with the love of Rachel, understood as the love of the beautiful. Paradoxically, we might even say that we are taught this lesson by Rachel herself, who once insisted that life without children was worse than death and who in the end sacrificed her beauty and her life in the service of perpetuation.

Love of the beautiful, the Bible suggests, is at best a detour and a distraction, at worst a form of idolatry. Love of visible beauty is, at bottom, an attempt to make time stand still, to deny one's own mortality and insufficiency, to attach one's perishable self to some seemingly perfect and unchanging earthly form. Only if such love is transformed and domesticated by custom and marriage and turned toward its ever-present possibility, the generation of children, can it become, for the children of the Book, a help to piety. For it is from the recognition of our own mortality and the resulting desire to give to our children not just life, but a good and righteous way of life, that we open ourselves to the ways and attitudes of the Bible. In the parental love of children lies the possibility of the sanctification of life—even in today's world. Not *eros* as such but procreation is the biblical way by which the love of man and woman can lead to the love of God.

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MUSIC

Tchaikovsky's Passion

Terry Teachout

A CENTURY after his death, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky remains, after Richard Wagner, the most controversial of the romantic composers. During his lifetime, he was attacked by Russian musicians who regarded him as insufficiently nationalistic in style. Throughout much of the modern era, he was charged by critics with vulgarity and sentimentalism. And the same critics, or others, also indicted him for less specific offenses like "neurosis," "morbidity," and "hysteria."

The once-common use of these loaded terms reflects the fact that Tchaikovsky was the first major composer known to have been homosexual: it was long taken for granted in the West that the extreme emotionalism of such works as the "Pathétique" Symphony was in some fundamental (and negative) sense a manifestation of his sexuality. More recently, academic "queer theorists" have speculated that Tchaikovsky's homosexuality was central to his music in very different ways. But in both cases, the underlying assumption has been that his compositions cannot be fully understood without reference to his sexual proclivities—or, in other words, that they are incapable of standing on their own.

As it happens, none of these disputes has had any effect whatsoever on Tchaikovsky's vast popularity. As early as 1891, when he opened New York's Carnegie Hall by conducting a program of his own works, he was hailed as one of the greatest of living composers; today, his symphonies and concertos are played year in and year out by every orchestra in the world, just as his ballet scores figure prominently in the repertories of virtually every important dance company. The current *Schwann/Opus* catalogue requires 24 columns to list all available recordings of his music (Wagner takes up 18 columns, Richard Strauss 13). No classical composer, not even Beethoven or Schubert, is more universally loved.

But the Tchaikovsky wars, though they have yet to diminish his standing with the listening public, continue to affect adversely our grasp of his complex personality, and the no less complex relationship of his personality to his music. If Tchaikovsky is the best loved of composers, he is also one of the least well understood.

RUSSIA'S GREATEST composer was born in 1840, the second of five children of Ilia Petrovich Tchaikovsky, a mining engineer, and Aleksandra Assier, a descendant of French émigrés. Though the Tchaikovskys were members of czarist Russia's hereditary gentry, they were not wealthy, and so young Pyotr was groomed for a legal career, attending St. Petersburg's Imperial School of Jurisprudence and then working as a civil servant in the Ministry of Justice. But the high-strung boy had long been obsessed with music, and in 1862 he became one of the first students at the St. Petersburg Conservatory.

After graduating in 1865, Tchaikovsky moved to Moscow to teach music theory at the Russian Musical Society (later the Moscow Conservatory). Within five years he had produced the first of his compositions to enter the standard reper-

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toire, a "fantasy-overture" inspired by Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. By the end of the 1870's, his accomplishments already included such masterpieces as the First Piano Concerto in B-Flat Minor, Op. 23 (1874-75); *Swan Lake*, Op. 20 (1875-76), the first of his three full-evening ballet scores; the Fourth Symphony in F Minor, Op. 36 (1877-78); an operatic version of Pushkin's verse novel, *Yevgeny Onegin* (1877-78); and the D-Major Violin Concerto, Op. 35 (1878).

Much of the enduring popularity of these works stems from their high melodic profiles—Tchaikovsky was, after Schubert, the outstanding melodist of the 19th century. Yet his great tunes, while immediately memorable in their own right, are not isolated events but fully integrated parts of formally innovative, large-scale musical structures. *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, is an extended single-movement tone poem in which sonata form is cunningly adapted to mirror the dramatic structure of Shakespeare's play.

If Western critics long failed to appreciate these innovations, one reason was that Tchaikovsky, virtually alone among the major composers of his time, rejected the aesthetic of 19th-century German romanticism. Though he adored the music of Mozart, he had little use for Beethoven and Brahms, or for the counterpoint-based developmental techniques of the Austro-German tradition. French music was his first love, and his lambent orchestral palette and springy, incisive dance rhythms owe far more to Hector Berlioz and Léo Delibes (the composer of such elegant ballet scores as *Sylvia* and *Coppélia*) than to any German model.

Tchaikovsky's Francophilia did nothing to endear him to the "Mighty Five," an influential group of self-taught Russian composers who fostered a dual cult of nationalism and amateurism. Yet for all his cosmopolitan qualities, he was still Russian through and through. German-speaking critics knew this—and did not like it. Here, for instance, is Vienna's Eduard Hanslick:

> The "Pathétique" Symphony has a special place among the compositions of Tchaikovsky in that there is not a trace of national Russian color. What lamentably trivial Cossack cheer we had to suffer in the finale of his Serenade, Op. 48, in his Violin Concerto, in his D-Major Quartet, or in the third movement of his Suite, Op. 54! There is nothing of this kind in [the "Pathétique" Symphony], whose character is downright West European and reveals a nobler mind and a more heartfelt interest.

TCHAIKOVSKY'S "RUSSIANNESS" is nowhere more evident than in his attraction to tragic subject matter, both in his stage works and in those instrumental pieces which, like *Romeo and Juliet*, are based on literary programs. Though his music is also full of vitality and high spirits—the Violin Concerto is a perfect example—sorrow is rarely far away, even in such major-key compositions as the yearning elegy that serves as the slow movement of the masterly C-Major Serenade for Strings, Op. 48 (1881).

The tragic streak is especially evident whenever Tchaikovsky takes up the subject of romantic love. Time and again, his protagonists, be they opera singers, ballerinas and their cavaliers, or the narrators of his art songs, enter into doomed romantic relationships that end in death or disillusion. And in this respect his life was one with his work. As he wrote to Nadezhda von Meck, his wealthy patron and confidante, in 1878:

> [I]f you ask me, my friend . . . whether I have experienced complete happiness in love, then I shall answer: no, no, and no!!! However, I believe the answer to this question is present in my music as well. But if you ask me whether I understand the full might, the full immeasurable force of this feeling, then I shall answer: yes, yes, and yes, and again I shall say that I have attempted with love to express the agony and also the bliss of love.

Tchaikovsky's inability to find lasting happiness in love was the direct result of his sexual makeup. Homosexuality, though nominally illegal in czarist Russia, was nonetheless tolerated (and practiced) among the upper classes, and it would have been possible for the composer to have entered into a long-term liaison with a man of similar inclination. But he was attracted to adolescent boys, and his "romances" consisted mainly of crushes on his male students, with some of whom it is probable that he became sexually involved.

Alarmed by his pederastic tendencies, Tchaikovsky decided to embark on "the eradication of pernicious passions from myself," and in 1877 he married Antonina Milyukova, a naive young music student who, obsessed with the composer, had threatened to kill herself out of love. But he apparently proved incapable of consummating the marriage, and within a matter of weeks he had fled to Switzerland, never again to live with his wife. For the remainder of his life, he found sexual release in anonymous encounters with members of the working class (including his own servants), while continuing to seek out erotically charged but mainly chaste friendships with young men of his own class.

The failure of Tchaikovsky's marriage forced him to come to terms with his homosexuality. As he wrote to his brother Anatoly the following year: "Only now, especially after the incident of my marriage, have I finally begun to understand that there is nothing more fruitless than wanting to be other than what I am by nature." It also cemented one of the most important relationships of the composer's adult life, his epistolary friendship with the wid-

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owed Nadezhda von Meck, with whom he began to correspond toward the end of 1876. Though the two friends, both of whom were shy to the point of misanthropy, determined never to meet in person (they did so only twice, both times by accident), they would exchange more than a thousand letters over the next thirteen years.

Not long after Tchaikovsky left his wife, von Meck began giving him an allowance—6,000 rubles yearly—which made it possible for him to quit teaching and devote himself exclusively to composition. In 1885, he rented a country home outside Moscow. There he adopted a strict work routine that, together with the financial security provided by von Meck, gave him an unprecedented measure of emotional stability. Most of the masterpieces of his major phase, including the Fifth Symphony in E Minor, Op. 64 (1888); the ballet scores *The Sleeping Beauty*, Op. 66 (1888-89), and *The Nutcracker*, Op. 71 (1891-92); the Pushkin opera *Pikovaya Dama* ("The Queen of Spades"), Op. 68 (1890); and the string sextet *Souvenir de Florence*, Op. 70 (1890-92), were written after he left Moscow.

BY 1893, when he began work on his Sixth Symphony in B Minor ("Pathétique"), Op. 74, Tchaikovsky was internationally renowned. It thus came as a terrible shock when later that year he fell victim to the cholera epidemic sweeping St. Petersburg, where he had traveled to conduct the symphony's premiere. He died on October 25.

In the wake of Tchaikovsky's sudden death, rumors of various kinds began to circulate among Russian musicians. Then as now, many believed that he committed suicide, either out of despair over his homosexuality or in order to escape exposure. But while Tchaikovsky was neurotic by any possible definition of the word—a moody hypochondriac who drank and gambled to excess, he left behind hundreds of letters full of violently expressed self-loathing—there is no concrete evidence of any kind to indicate that he killed himself, whether by taking poison or (as the most popular rumor had it) by deliberately drinking unboiled tap water at a St. Petersburg restaurant, thus exposing himself to cholera germs. Moreover, his sexuality had long since become an open secret, and there was no realistic possibility of his being harmed by public scandal.

Still, Tchaikovsky's death came at a moment of new public awareness of homosexuality, symbolized in Europe by the 1895 trial and imprisonment of Oscar Wilde. The Wilde trial, coming as it did at the height of the Victorian era, inevitably affected attitudes toward Tchaikovsky; once his homosexuality was common knowledge in the West, many leaped to the conclusion that there was (as the critic James Huneker put it) something "pathological" about his music as well.

In time, such beliefs invaded the historical record, lending specious reciprocal credibility to the suicide theory. Soviet musicologists, viewing Tchaikovsky's homosexuality as a manifestation of bourgeois decadence, engaged in wholesale alteration and suppression of his diaries and correspondence, as well as other primary source materials; meanwhile, the suicide theory found its way into such well-known Western reference books as the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Not until the publication in 1991 of Alexander Poznansky's *Tchaikovsky: The Quest for the Inner Man* was a factually reliable biography published, and even Poznansky was forced to rely in part on censored archival material, some of which has since become available in unexpurgated form.*

By this time, however, a new turn had been taken in the attitude toward Tchaikovsky's sexuality. Starting in the 60's he began to be portrayed by gay writers as a martyr figure, driven to his death not by his own "pathology" but by rampant homophobia. From Ken Russell's preposterous 1971 film *The Music Lovers* to the recent Broadway production of *Swan Lake*, in which Prince Siegfried is a closet homosexual who falls hopelessly in love with a swaggering male swan, this revisionist view, though unsupported by fact, has achieved wide circulation and acceptance. The advent of "queer theory," with its politicized perspective on the life and work of homosexual artists, will no doubt ensure yet another cycle of fact-free hypothesizing. At a recent seminar on Tchaikovsky's music, for instance, one musicologist suggested in all seriousness that the composer's characteristic use of rhythmic repetition was a "suppressive compulsive release" brought about by homosexual panic.

SUCH ABSURD notions obscure the fact that Tchaikovsky, like Aaron Copland and Benjamin Britten, was not a helpless prisoner of his sexual peculiarities, capable of speaking only to his own kind. Indeed, had his homosexuality remained a secret, it is unlikely that his musical emotionalism would ever have been characterized as "neurotic," for it is a wholly typical manifestation of the romantic temperament, balanced by the luminous clarity of his orchestral palette and the innovative yet disciplined formal structures of his mature works. That combination is reminiscent of nothing so much as the music of Berlioz, a composer whose heterosexuality has never been called into question.

To be sure, one cannot appreci-

* Poznansky has definitively discredited the various versions of the suicide theory in *Tchaikovsky's Last Days: A Documentary Study* (Oxford, 236 pp., $29.95). In addition, the newly published *Tchaikovsky and His World*, edited by Leslie Kearney (Princeton, 369 pp., $19.95 paper), contains unexpurgated reconstructions by Poznansky of seventeen letters by the composer that shed considerable light on the extent to which Soviet musicologists conspired to suppress information about his sexual behavior and attitudes.

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ate a piece like the "Pathétique"—or perform it convincingly—without entering fully and freely into its highly charged emotional world. Those who are made uncomfortable by the uninhibited expression of strong feelings will find Tchaikovsky's music embarrassing.

But one must also be careful to distinguish: there are feelings and there are feelings. The other avatar of 19th-century hyper-romanticism, after all, was Wagner, yet Tchaikovsky's music has next to nothing in common with his. Indeed, though he readily acknowledged Wagner's genius, Tchaikovsky found his operas repellent: "Before, music strove to delight people—now they are tormented and exhausted." Like Nietzsche, Tchaikovsky preferred Bizet's *Carmen*, describing it in these suggestive terms:

> This music has no pretensions to profundity, but it is so charming in its simplicity, so vigorous, not contrived but instead sincere, that I learned all of it from beginning to end almost by heart.

One might well say much the same thing of Tchaikovsky's music. It is not profound, at least not by the standards of Beethoven or Schubert. Nor does it strive to translate complex philosophical concepts into the language of tone. But it is certainly sincere. Even in his grandest compositions, Tchaikovsky is concerned exclusively with the joys and sorrows of the individual soul, sometimes writ large but still essentially intimate. And even in his blackest moments of despair, he never loses sight of the need to please the listener.

As for Tchaikovsky's artistry, George Balanchine, who made more ballets to his music than any other choreographer, summed the matter up concisely when he said that "Tchaikovsky is Pushkin in music: supreme craftsmanship, exact proportions, majesty." The "Pathétique" may be the most emotionally wrenching symphony of the late 19th century, but it is also a paragon of formal control and lucid orchestration—a fusion of Russian passion and fastidious French craftsmanship.

This synthesis of seemingly irreconcilable qualities is what places Tchaikovsky at the head of the Franco-Russian tradition that leads directly to the music of Debussy, Stravinsky, and the tonal modernists, just as Wagner's operas inspired Arnold Schoenberg to reconceive the Austro-German tradition in nontonal terms. Now that Schoenberg's innovations have proved sterile, it should come as no surprise that though the Tchaikovsky wars continue to rage, few battles are being fought over the ultimate worth of his music. Today's critics, whatever they may think about his sexuality, are rightly disposed to rate him as one of the supreme musical geniuses of all time—a conclusion that audiences around the world reached long ago.

Tchaikovsky on CD: A Select Discography

THOUGH TCHAIKOVSKY died too soon to leave behind commercial recordings of his own, his music has been central to the classical recording industry from its earliest days. Here are some of the most memorable examples:

1928-37: Willem Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam were among the first to record the Tchaikovsky symphonies, and their versions of the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Symphonies are readily available on CD in clear-sounding transfers from the original 78's. Mengelberg's way with Tchaikovsky was idiosyncratic to the point of outright eccentricity (and not infrequently well beyond it), but these spectacularly charismatic performances, coupled with an equally striking *Romeo and Juliet*, leave no doubt that under his baton, the Concertgebouw was one of the world's greatest orchestras (Music & Arts CD 809, two CD's).

1938: Austro-German artists rarely give convincing performances of Franco-Russian music, but Wilhelm Furtwängler's famous recording of the "Pathétique" Symphony with the Berlin Philharmonic, available as part of the excellent four-CD set *Wilhelm Furtwängler: The Best of the Early Studio Recordings, 1929-43*, is a universally acknowledged exception to the rule. The weighty first movement and anguished finale compensate more than sufficiently for an insufficiently extroverted scherzo (Music & Arts CD-954, four CD's).

1943: Perhaps the most thrilling of all Tchaikovsky recordings is a version of the First Piano Concerto deriving from a public performance by Vladimir Horowitz with Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra on April 25, 1943, at a Carnegie Hall benefit concert where the audience purchased $11 million in war bonds. Though there are many ways to interpret this hugely popular cornerstone of the piano repertoire, the fiery, at times almost frighteningly intense approach of Horowitz and Toscanini, heard here in decent broadcast-quality sound, is

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hard to resist (RCA Victor Gold Seal 7992-2-RG).

1948-50: The St. Petersburg Philharmonic (known under Soviet rule as the Leningrad Philharmonic) was Russia's preeminent orchestra throughout the tenure of Yevgeny Mravinsky, the aristocratic conductor who led it from 1938 to 1982. Three of its most characteristic Tchaikovsky performances, *Francesca da Rimini*, Op. 32, *Capriccio Italien*, Op. 45, and the Serenade for Strings, have been reissued (in, alas, overfiltered sound) as part of Melodiya's *Mravinsky Edition* (Melodiya/BMG 74321-29409-2).

1952: The Hollywood String Quartet made a superlative recording for Capitol of the First Quartet in D Major, Op. 11, in which the vibrant, tautly disciplined Russian style of playing associated with Jascha Heifetz can be heard in a chamber-music setting (Testament SBT 1061).

1958: Virtually every important violinist of the 20th century has recorded the D-Major Concerto at least once, and several of these performances—in particular those of Heifetz, Mischa Elman, Bronislaw Huberman, Nathan Milstein, and David Oistrakh—are of extraordinarily high quality. Still, violin connoisseurs have always had a special place on their shelves for Isaac Stern's second rendition of the Tchaikovsky Concerto. Stern's shapely playing, exquisitely accompanied by Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, strikes a golden mean of interpretation that has yet to be bettered (Sony Classical SMK 66829).

1958: No recording of the First Piano Concerto has been bought by more people than the one Van Cliburn made with Kiril Kondrashin and the Symphony of the Air immediately after his triumphant return from the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. This expansive performance has never been out of print since its release in 1958, and despite formidable competition on CD from such pianists as Horowitz, Evgeny Kissin, Egon Petri, Benno Moiseiwitsch, Artur Rubinstein, and Solomon, it remains nonpareil (RCA Victor Red Seal 07863-55912-2).

1972: The Second Piano Concerto in G Major, Op. 44, is not nearly so familiar as its predecessor (save to balletgoers, who know it as the score of George Balanchine's *Ballet Imperial*), but many critics regard it as the finer of the two. The Russian pianist Emil Gilels recorded the Second Concerto with Lorin Maazel and the New Philharmonia Orchestra, and even though he makes use (as did Balanchine) of a corrupt edition prepared by Alexander Siloti, this is nonetheless one of Gilels's most compelling interpretations (EMI Classics CDFB 68637, two CD's).

1992: No version of *Yevgeny Onegin* can be considered definitive, but Semyon Bychkov's recording with the St. Petersburg Chamber Choir and the Orchestre de Paris is an exemplary performance in which the roles of Onegin and Lensky are sung respectively by the Siberian baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky and the American tenor Neil Shicoff, their foremost contemporary exponents (Philips 438 235-2, two CD's).

1992: Valery Gergiev, the outstanding Tchaikovsky conductor of our time, has recorded *The Sleeping Beauty* with the Kirov Orchestra, the pit orchestra of St. Petersburg's Maryinsky Theater, where numerous Tchaikovsky stage works received their premieres. His unrivaled interpretation of the most ambitious of Tchaikovsky's three full-evening ballet scores has all the dramatic sweep of a theatrical performance (Philips 434 922-2, three CD's). Of comparable interest is Gergiev's newly released recording, again with the Kirov, of *The Nutcracker*, complete on one CD (Philips 289 462 114-2).

1993: Except for the Goethe setting known in English as "None but the lonely heart," few of Tchaikovsky's songs are heard with any regularity in the West. Fortunately, these marvelous songs are now being recorded with increasing frequency by Russian-speaking singers, and nineteen of the very best are included on a beautifully sung CD by the mezzo-soprano Olga Borodina (Philips 442 013-2).

1995: David Finckel, the cellist of the Emerson String Quartet, also records with his wife, the pianist Wu Han, for his own ArtistLed label, whose releases can be ordered directly from its Web site (www.ArtistLed.com). They are joined by the violinist Da-Hong Seetoo for a performance of the A-Minor Trio, Op. 50, that ranks among the great chamber-music recordings of the postwar era (ArtistLed 19601-2).

1996: The cellist Mischa Maisky is accompanied by the conductor-less Orpheus Chamber Orchestra in a lovely performance of the engaging Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op. 33. Also included on this CD is the richly expressive *Souvenir de Florence*, Op. 70, heard not in Tchaikovsky's original version for string sextet but in a convincing arrangement for string orchestra, played with boldness and flair by the full Orpheus string section (DGG 453 460-2).

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Books in Review

Back to Basics

Ceasefire!
Why Women and Men
Must Join Forces to Achieve
True Equality
by Cathy Young
Free Press. 400 pp. $25.00

What Our Mothers Didn't
Tell Us: Why Happiness
Eludes the Modern Woman
by Danielle Crittenden
Simon & Schuster. 224 pp. $23.00

A Return to Modesty:
Discovering the Lost Virtue
by Wendy Shalit
Free Press. 304 pp. $24.00

Reviewed by
Elizabeth Powers

THAT SEXUAL differences do make a difference was the first human truth denied by contemporary feminists. The second was that even the most ordinary transactions of life between men and women possess a vast capacity for havoc. Women's entry in large numbers into the workplace was supposed to be a purely bureaucratic affair, an adjustment of numbers in the interest of equity. But, coinciding as it did with the liberation of women from the demands of reproduction through birth control and then legalized abortion, a movement ostensibly designed to make women equal competitors with men ended up changing radically the nature of their sexual relationships.

What once gave starch to those relationships was the prospect of pregnancy. Chastity was to a romance as fourteen lines are to a sonnet, a net and baseline to a tennis match. If you strayed beyond those parameters, you lost; but if you stayed within them, you developed musculature. You learned how to say no; failing that, you were forced to take responsibility for the mistakes you made, and sometimes you even learned from them.

For 30 years, the net has been removed, the baseline has disappeared, and all hell has broken loose. When women stopped saying "no" to men in sexual matters, it was only a matter of time before they would have to turn over to the courts, of all institutions, the adjudication and even the definition of their personal relationships. The resulting legacy of bad faith, hurt feelings, and blasted hopes is something even some feminists have reluctantly come to acknowledge. Still, as their conspicuous silence in the face of the revelations about our priapic President suggests, if there is to be any reassessment of feminist first principles, it will not come from within, or from the older generation that formulated those principles in the first place.

Fortuitously, three new books, all by younger writers, subject to sharp analysis the repercussions of the legal enshrinement of "equality," and thereby add significantly to our understanding not only of how feminism established its grip on the culture but of the toll it has taken.

FROM THE surface of things, the journalist Cathy Young, who has the distinction of having been born and raised in the Soviet Union, might

ELIZABETH POWERS *is co-editor of* Pilgrim Souls: An Anthology of Spiritual Autobiographies *(Simon & Schuster).*

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be expected to have some especially trenchant observations on our own topsy-turvy state of affairs. As she writes in *Ceasefire! Why Women and Men Must Join Forces to Achieve True Equality*, when she left the USSR in 1980 at the age of seventeen she was already a feminist, if of an old-fashioned kind. Her mother was a professor of music, and she herself "passionately believed that, as Nora said in *A Doll's House*, 'Before I am a woman I am a human being': what I was and what I did was not defined by my sex."

Then, as a newly minted American college student, Young came to witness the increasingly irrational behavior of those professing to be feminists: "young women . . . acting as a volunteer thought police." One of Young's intentions in this book is to unmask the false claims of these "thought police," especially as they concern the supposed continued inequality of women in the United States.

In fact, as she shows:

> Girls are *not* silenced or ignored in the classroom. Medicine has *not* neglected women's health. Abuse by men is *not* the leading cause of injury to American women; the courts do *not* treat violence toward women more leniently than violence toward men. Gender disparities in pay and job status are *not* merely a consequence of sex discrimination. The 80's were *not* a "backlash decade" but a time of steady progress for women and, generally, of strong support for women's advancement.

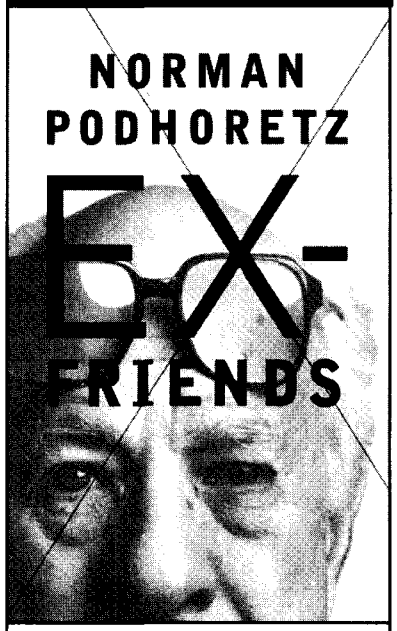
Young has done her legal homework, scrutinizing court cases involving gender violence and sex crimes, child abuse and domestic violence, child custody and school curricula: excrescences of a cultural agenda that has been put in place to support spurious feminist claims and provide employment for enforcers. Yet even as she demonstrates the havoc wrought by this agenda in the lives of ordinary people, Young insists that she does not wish to abandon feminism. Her purpose, rather, is one of restoration. What we need, she writes, is something like the old-fashioned feminism of her mother and her own seventeen-year-old self:

> [A] philosophy that is not pro-woman (or pro-man) but pro-fairness; that stresses flexibility and more options for all; that encourages us to treat people, regardless of sex, as human beings.

Alas, boilerplate prose aside, the society of human equality Young advocates is but a newer version of the utopian—and surreptitiously class-ridden—proposals Gloria Steinem used to expound in her day for our future social order, and is subject to the same criticism. Sexual differentiation, and the arrangements that have historically arisen from it, produce messy compromises that cannot be brought under the discipline of efficiency experts, any more than children can be raised with a Filofax. Certain high-powered female college graduates of the 1960's and 1970's may have earned enough money to keep their personal and professional lives in separate columns of the ledger; and for those who managed to marry and have children, general affluence and all that it could buy may have made up for any losses on the family side of things. But most married couples are less fortunate economically; and feminism, as Young herself shows, has only made their lives messier.

But that is not all. In elevating the work that most women do outside the home to the status of career (the "two-career couple," she writes, "has become the norm"), Young inevitably denigrates what they do inside the home, and thus misses something essential about the desires of ordinary women. Most women want to have and raise their own children. Although Young nods respectfully in the direction of traditional choices, for her as for feminists generally it is only through

"A memoir that you cannot put down and you won't forget."*



"A remarkable account of the lost world of the New York intellectuals of the 1960s, of the politics of ideas in modern America."
—William Kristol,*
The Weekly Standard

"A fascinating and impressively honest book...positively Proustian."
—Paul Johnson

"Turbulent brilliance."
—*Kirkus Reviews*

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"significant" work and economic freedom that women really become human. The last part of her book is thus devoted to a critique of conservative opponents of feminism like George Gilder and F. Carolyn Graglia, advocates of traditional sexual prerogatives.

That critique does not succeed. One may agree with Young that women do not have to bear children to be "human persons." But it is within those larger social webs, including families, which inculcate and perpetuate human virtues, that most people still find their greatest fulfillment. Indeed, whether the achievements on which our prosperity is based can exist without these structures and the virtues they transmit is a question that should give pause to any self-declared feminist, especially to an anti-feminist feminist like Young.

IF CATHY YOUNG is engaged in a rescue mission, trying to salvage something from the wreckage of a movement gone desperately awry, no such motive impels Danielle Crittenden in *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Woman*. The massive social upheaval that has occurred in the name of sexual equality—not to mention the massive amounts spent by government in engineering the desired result—has not, she writes, "been able to banish fundamental female desires." Most women still "want to marry husbands who will love and respect us; we want to have children; we want to be good mothers to those children."

Crittenden, a leading light of the Independent Women's Forum and the editor of its feisty publication, the *Women's Quarterly*, knows well how hard it is to invest such simple facts with the cultural authority they once enjoyed. So thoroughly have feminist categories of thought seeped into women's consciousness, she writes, "like intravenous saline into the arm of an unconscious patient," that many women are "feminists without knowing it." That is, they are so much "in the habit of approaching [their] problems as those arising from inequality and sexism that [they] cannot imagine any other way to think about them." Her book is therefore constructed as a systematic rebuttal of myths that, for most young women, conservative and liberal alike, still count as gospel truth: that sexual liberty is essential to women's equality; that dependency is dangerous; that, in a good marriage, each partner remains a separate and distinct individual; that women should have children when convenient, but in no case should they permit their children to define them or their lives.

Crittenden's demolition of these propositions is thorough, and thoroughly satisfying. In adopting, under the aegis of feminism, the libertarian sexual agenda of men, women trade away what they most want—lasting love and all that goes with it—for an illusion of sexual power. When they then wake up to the fact that they *do* want marriage and a family, they find (unlike older men) that they have less sexual power with which to attain them. As for marriage, it is not about the promotion of rights but about their surrender, by both men and women—especially when there are children involved. And as any mother knows, those children will dominate a woman's mind to a degree she could scarcely imagine possible beforehand.

There are few rhetorical flourishes in this book, but the cumulative effect is weighty. Crittenden's "essentialist" view of the differences between men and women is balanced by a realistic assessment of the many hitherto undreamed-of possibilities modern life offers to those in the middle class. Women today are likely to live 80 years and even be healthy in old age. This, for Crittenden, constitutes an argument not for postponing marriage and children but, to the contrary, for early marriage and child-bearing, followed by reentry into the workforce after the (comparatively few) years devoted to caring for one's young children. After all, as she writes, despite today's long life spans,

> the length of time it takes for a human being to transform from a demanding infant into a smiling baby into a crawling terror into a walking child into a teenager and finally into a grown man or woman is profoundly short.

Only in the upside-down world of feminist ideology would such a deeply reasonable observation seem counterintuitive—or downright blasphemous.

A JOURNEY of a thousand miles starts with one step, the Chinese say. If so, by the time it comes to an end the journey itself will have consumed a countless number of steps, each one taking us only imperceptibly far from the one before. One day, however, a member of the caravan may look up and note that somehow the climate has changed, the local flora and fauna are different: where once the wind was warm, it is now chilly, and where once we walked on grass, we now tread on ice. Just such an indispensable service is performed by the twenty-three-year-old Wendy Shalit in *A Return to Modesty*, a powerful and witty book that registers the changes in our social landscape in all their starkness while also illuminating many of the steps that brought us to where we are.

Wendy Shalit was born in 1975, the year the Vietnam war ended, one year after the resignation of Richard Nixon, two years after the Supreme Court issued its decision in *Roe* v. *Wade* declaring abortion a constitutional right. Women of my generation, already grown up by 1975, had been in the forefront of the social changes whose effects were to be visited on the young girls of hers. The opening anecdote of

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her book shows one such woman, a nice lady named "Mrs. Nelson," who appeared one day in Shalit's fourth-grade Wisconsin classroom to initiate her young charges in the areas of "Human Growth and Development." From the question box on her lap, Mrs. Nelson pulled out a slip of white paper, which she cheerily read aloud: "What is 69, class?"

Luckily for Shalit, her mother did not wish her to learn about such subjects at the age of nine, and so she sat out the classes in the school library. The perspective she thereby gained on the effects of sexual enlightenment on her age-mates, especially the little boys, brilliantly clarifies the process by which feminism, in Danielle Crittenden's phrase, "seeped" into the minds of later generations. The leading agent of that osmotic process was sex education:

> "Erica, do you *masturbate*?" one boy would say to one poor pigtailed victim. . . . Then another boy would say, closing in on her from the other side, "It's really *natural*, you know."

Or:

> "Why aren't you developing, Erica? . . . It's time for you to be developing, didn't you hear?"

To which poor Erica, before bursting into tears, would reply:

> "Mrs. *Nelson* says that if you tease us about what we learn in *class*, then you haven't understood the principle of *respect*."

By the time Shalit got to Williams College in the early 1990's, coed bathrooms were the rule; but respect, along with lots of other things, had gone out the window. In their place had come a sexual regime ten times more oppressive than the "patriarchal" one from which feminism and associated ideas claimed to have liberated Shalit and her generation of young women. Her article on that regime, "A Ladies' Room of One's Own," caused a sensation when it was published in COMMENTARY (August 1995), and led to the writing of this book.

In part an examination of the pathologies that have resulted from the relentless sexualization of the world of young people, *A Return to Modesty* seeks to reclaim what has been forgotten: that sex is significant. Girls, Shalit writes, have always known this, and once revealed it by their blushes and giggles. Intending to get rid of the blushes, feminists and sex educators have produced not only coed bathrooms and boorish boys but a generation of women in terror of date rape and prone to eating disorders and self-mutilation. Their romantic experience can be summed up, to paraphrase Shalit, by the two topics that seem to dominate the columns of today's women's magazines: "How to Have Great Sex with Men You Hardly Know" and "How To Get Over the Heartbreak of Having Had Sex with Men Who Don't Care to Get to Know You."

Against today's licentiousness, Shalit places a consideration of the "lost virtue" of restraint: a virtue that, in her telling, permitted young women to be true to their natures and to value their own sexuality at something like its real worth, in the interest of one day finding lasting love, which, Shalit also affirms, is what most young women desire. Taking us through the experience of other times and places, she invokes an abundance of historical and philosophical sources in support of her notion that a "cartel of virtue" once ensured a separate realm for girls, allowing them to develop at their own pace and to explore areas of life apart from the sexual. This cartel is what she would, if she could, restore.

Though she offers what is perhaps too schematic an exit from today's battlefields, there can be no

Reading the Holocaust

Inga Clendinnen

Reading the Holocaust is an uncompromising attempt to extract the comprehensible — the recognizably human — from the unthinkable inhuman acts of the Holocaust. Clendinnen explores the experience of the Holocaust from both the victims' and the perpetrators' points of view. She discusses the remarkable survivor testimonies of writers such as Primo Levi and Charlotte Delbo, the vexing issue of "resistance" in the camps, and survivors' strategies for understanding the motivations of the Nazi leadership. She focuses an anthropologist's precise gaze on the actions of the murderers in the police battalions and among the SS in the camps. Finally she considers how the Holocaust has been portrayed in poetry, fiction, and film.

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doubt that, partly with the aid of expert testimony from earlier and more decorous ages, but mostly through her own preternaturally sharp eyes and mind, Shalit has seen deeply into female nature, and into the malaise of a generation. *A Return to Modesty* certainly caused me to view the college students I teach in a new light. Only a few years younger than Wendy Shalit, these students strike me most of all by their extreme mental passivity—another inheritance of the regime of political correctness to which they have been subjected all their lives, and of which feminism has long been the leading component.

After reading Shalit's book, I began to have the feeling that, in reality, my students, and legions like them all across the country, are not so much passive as waiting, heads down, for the floodwaters to recede so that they can at last regain their lives. Indeed, I would like to believe that, in taking us back to basics, Danielle Crittenden and Wendy Shalit are harbingers of a movement that may yet succeed in reclaiming the battered traces of the civilized life that was once our common birthright. If so, we will all owe these young women a debt of gratitude.

A Company Man

The Times of My Life
And My Life with the Times
by Max Frankel
Random House. 560 pp. $29.95

Reviewed by
Dan Seligman

NO ONE individual could ever claim to be the voice of the *New York Times*—that voice is all too plainly institutional—but Max Frankel comes closer than anybody else one can think of. In 45 years with the paper, he has been, among other things, its chief Washington correspondent (1968-73), its Sunday editor (1973-76), *maestro* of its editorial board (1977-86), and executive editor, i.e., top man (1986-94). In the last few years, he has been writing a column for the paper's *Sunday Magazine*. And now there comes this memoir about the meaning of it all.

I confess to having approached this work in a spirit of high grouchiness, put off partly by Frankel's relentless liberalism, observed over years of exposure to the *Times*, as well as by a distinct impression that, in the years when he was in charge, the paper's editorials were klutzier than ever. But this turns out to be unfair to the book. Despite occasional outbursts of reverentialism—"Our ink assumes the force of blood and joins us to our readers in a perpetually loving, feuding family"—it is generally fun to read and in several areas fascinating. The first 50 pages, centered on the Frankel family's terrifying adventures escaping from Germany after the outbreak of World War II, testify anew to the axiom that every survivor has a story.

The book is organized chronologically, and dances back and forth between Frankel's personal and professional life. It ducks some of the big questions, yet at many points is astonishingly candid. I did not expect a *Times* eminence to slide into the tell-all mode and gripe in print about the charlatans his staff was exposed to in "diversity-training" sessions, or to cite instances of managerial ineptitude by the new publisher (Arthur Sulzberger, Jr.), or to mention a certain uneasiness—registered over vodka in the publisher's back room—over the fact that, at one point, all the top editors on the masthead were Jewish.

FRANKEL, WHO was born in 1930, was obviously a natural for the role. The journalism schools are full of neophytes who would kill to get a job on the *Times*, but cannot figure out whom to kill. Frankel, in contrast, homed in on a *Times* career like a cruise missile. He selected Columbia as his college because of the school's daily paper, the *Spectator*, which had links to "downtown reporters." Then, defying all precedent, as a mere sophomore he talked his way into a job as the *Times*'s on-campus stringer.

Consciously or otherwise, Frankel came out of Columbia (class of 1952) with the perfect background: Truman Democrat, United World Federalists, an anti-Communist who felt that the persecution of Hollywood writers made America as bad as Russia—and a view of journalism as at once deeply gratifying and a "moral imperative." He was instantly taken onto the *Times* staff, and then wangled a one-year postponement of his military duties because employers for whom you had worked for a year were obliged to take you back afterward. While in uniform, he also talked himself into a job on *Stars and Stripes*.

Back on the staff, at age twenty-five, Frankel was sent overseas for the *Times* in a bit more than a year, landing in Vienna, Moscow, and Havana before marching off to Washington. The rest followed inexorably.

AMONG THE big questions not dealt with in this book: *why* is the *New York Times* liberal? Instead of, oh, say, conservative? All of us—those who judge the paper totally marvelous and those whose scorecard reads "unfortunately unavoidable"—take the liberalism of the *Times* as one of the huge givens in our lives. But why should that be?

Frankel obviously finds the question uninteresting, in part because he appears sincerely to believe that "liberal" and "conservative" are terms devoid of meaning, used only as tendentious labels in ideological arguments. This thought is tossed at the reader when he cites (and

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reprints a sizable chunk of) his contribution to a September 1976 COMMENTARY symposium, "What Is a Liberal—Who Is a Conservative?" Beyond that, he thinks of himself and the *Times* as pragmatically unideological, driven simply by the imperatives of "quality journalism" and "public service."

Omitted from Frankel's consideration is the observable fact that these imperatives reliably generate positions that any normal person would instantly identify as liberal: positions on abortion rights (yes), impeachment (no), affirmative action (you'd better believe it), gay rights (ditto), higher minimum wages (yes), sex education for fourth graders (yes), missile defense (no), punishment for Pinochet (yes), the death penalty (heaven forfend), the defense budget (always swollen), school choice (no), government-supplied clean needles for addicts (plain common sense), and coeducation at the Virginia Military Institute (imperative). That's pragmatism?

Times editorials, and assorted passages in Frankel's book, suffer from a kind of "establishment fallacy"—the fallacy of assuming that your own world is *the* world and your group's ideas are the only ones that can be taken seriously. Alternative views are thereby postulated to be short-sighted, irrational, biased, mean-spirited, or dangerous, and sometimes all at once. Thus, Frankel proudly reprints an 80's editorial, done on his watch, stating that Ronald Reagan's "economic remedies mask an assault on the very idea that free people can solve their collective problems through representative government." As the *Times* then saw it, to agree with Reagan's economic policies was not just wrong; it threatened, no less, the survival of democracy.

One of Frankel's chapters focuses heavily on the paper's long-running argument with the state of Israel (he was always one of the principal arguers). In common with an infinity of *Times* editorials over the years, the chapter simply assumes into nonexistence the tough questions about Israel's security; takes it for granted that Israeli concessions equal peace; and bemoans the short-sightedness of American Jews who reject this posture. Laboring to connect his strategic recommendations with his Jewish heritage, Frankel signs off with a self-congratulatory paragraph specifying that this heritage is the ultimate source of his own "devotion to rationality and reasonableness." Max, one wishes to plead, be reasonable.

HERE IS a hypothesis: *Times* liberalism has two main sources. The first, untouched with a fourteen-foot pole by Frankel, is the rather obvious fact that the educated upscale New Yorkers long targeted by the *Times* advertising and circulation departments are, on the whole, quite liberal. In the book's concluding chapters, Frankel tries to say something about the interaction of the business and publishing sides, but he never gets much beyond chitchat about budgets, conflict-of-interest rules, and the occasional small favors done for big advertisers. No consideration is given to the possibility that somebody in that building on West 43rd Street—and maybe even a Sulzberger—has at some point connected the dots between the basic message and the basic market.

The second source of the liberal tilt is the *Times*'s editorial staff, inevitably drawn from a talent pool in which *dirigiste* liberal-arts graduates are seriously overrepresented. The staff is more liberal than the paper itself, and a lot more liberal than the publisher. This is not Frankel's formulation, but it fits the facts he gives us: the publisher wants a moderate, high-minded, do-good version of liberalism, but the troops often push far-out "movement" demands, so the publisher responds by hiring executive editors (Max Frankel, take a bow) who are somewhere in between and who figure to keep the troops at least partly in line.

That this is not always an easy task is a theme of *The Times of My Life*, in which we get to see the executive editor coping with any number of ghastly problems:

Item. There is a first-rate "national editor" who is long overdue for a promotion. Why has he not been promoted? Because it is believed that his deputy, one of Frankel's cherished affirmative-action recruits, is not up to the job—but also that the deputy's *failure* to get the job would trigger an explosion among other minority-group members in the newsroom. The problem is dodged by leaving the national editor unpromoted for seventeen years, until, finally, Frankel talks the deputy into trying out life as a foreign correspondent.

Item. Responding to the gay-rights movement, the *Times* begins to name "companions" among the survivors in obituaries. But now there is a push for news stories about weddings of gay and lesbian couples. This makes Frankel very uneasy, and he turns down the demand, arguing that the paper's society page needs some kind of "full legal sanction" before it can report on such marriages. But then it suddenly occurs to him that the gay movement could point to a certain contradiction in his argument: the Sunday "engagement" announcements in the *Times*, which are entirely self-reported, also lack any such sanction. Fearful of seeming discriminatory, Frankel cuts the Gordian knot by killing engagement announcements, which disappeared from the *Times* in January 1994.

Item. After years of special efforts to hire and promote more women, and applauding the creation of a female staff caucus (in 1972), Frankel is inevitably rewarded by an explosion of rage in the newsroom when somebody demonstrates that the *Times* runs fewer front-page stories about women than does *USA Today*. This gets him really upset because

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the *Times* is a serious paper while *USA Today* has a lot of front-page stuff on entertainment and sports. In the course of defending this position, he gives an interview to the *Washington Post*, during which he observes: "I mean that if you are covering local teas, you've got more women on Page One than the *Wall Street Journal*." The next day, every woman in the newsroom except, mercifully, Frankel's wife—he is married to the editor Joyce Purnick—shows up wearing tea bags as earrings.

So what do you do? Obviously, you grovel. "I am angry with myself both for giving offense to some colleagues and for obscuring my real point."

Max, one wants to remind him, it comes with the territory.

Observance

Rethinking Modern Judaism: Ritual, Commandment, Community

by Arnold M. Eisen

Chicago. 339 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
David Singer

A longstanding critique of Judaism, dating at least from the time of the Christian Bible, is that, as a religion, it is preoccupied with practice as against—or even to the exclusion of—belief. According to this view, the pious Jew is distinguished not by the sincerity of his faith but only by the punctiliousness of his observance. Meeting the ceremonial demands of *halakhah*, Jewish law, is all that really matters.

For most of Jewish history, responding to this charge was never especially difficult. After all, the self-conscious affirmation of the divine is integral to Jewish worship, beginning with the *Shema*, Judaism's central prayer. More profoundly, it is itself the root of traditional Jewish observance, whose fundamental premise is that the rigors of *halakhah* represent the will of God as revealed at Sinai.

Over the last two centuries, however, as Jews have moved with progressively greater freedom into the wider Gentile world, the relationship between practice and belief has become more problematic. Many modern Jews who have continued to carry forward at least some of the rituals and observances of their fathers are far less certain about theological first principles, and some even reject them altogether. Why, then, do they persist in clinging to the forms?

For Arnold M. Eisen, a professor of religious studies at Stanford University and the author of several respected books on American Jewish life, the continued adherence to Jewish practice on the part of at least a portion of modern Jews—himself included—is a puzzle requiring an explanation. Indeed, the idea for *Rethinking Modern Judaism* occurred to him, he reports, while watching the elaborate procession for the festival of Sukkot at a Philadelphia synagogue some years ago, a procession that requires one to march around the sanctuary holding palm branches and a citron:

> I could not help but wonder, despite my familiarity with the rituals of the holiday, what on earth these people were doing and why they were doing it. A few moments later, no less incredulous than before, I had joined the march.

As Eisen points out, a number of distinguished Jewish thinkers have attempted to provide a rationale for ritual observance in the modern context. For the German rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-88), a founder of "modern" Orthodoxy, the challenge was to articulate a rational, universalist basis for old commandments. According to Hirsch, the Jewish dietary laws, for instance, were to be understood as a symbolic expression of the moral difference between human beings and the animals they consume. Addressing a more secular audience, the German Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) sought to restore authority to the ritual realm by tying its requirements to a more personal, existential relationship to God. Mordecai Kaplan (1881-1983), the founder of the Reconstructionist movement in the United States, promoted rituals as "folkways" that were expressive of an all-embracing Jewish civilization and provided an indispensable tool for building communal solidarity.

For Eisen, however, such theological formulations—or substitutes for theology—are of secondary importance in understanding the shifting attitudes of modern Jews toward ritual, a phenomenon best explained, he believes, in social and psychological terms. Basically, he

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discerns a dialectical pattern. On the one hand, there are factors that actively *discourage* observance. Here Eisen focuses on "politics," a category that for him covers not only discriminatory laws and edicts but also hostile social attitudes.

In the 19th century, Eisen observes, Jews in West European countries were under pressure to conduct themselves in an "enlightened" manner. They quickly become aware that the

> retention or attainment of political liberties depended on the demonstration of *Bildung* or civilization: dressing and eating a certain way, speaking a "pure" form of the reigning language, worshipping with proper decorum.

In examining their own practices, European Jews thus found themselves having to consider the degree to which, by contributing to their own "distinctiveness," they were drawing an unfriendly Gentile reaction. Today, analogous if much less overt pressures continue to operate even in such an open and tolerant society as the United States.

On the other side of the ledger, Eisen points to nostalgia—the desire to connect, if only fleetingly, with a lost ancestral world—as the leading factor *encouraging* ritual behavior among modern Jews. Nostalgia allows them to believe that "they 'remain standing in the door of [the] ancestral house' despite the manifest distance they have traveled from it." Though "their daily practices for the most part are not distinctively Jewish, their minds by and large not furnished from Jewish storehouses," Eisen writes, they nonetheless find "meaning" and "value" in Jewish practice; emotions are "centered and created" there. Of equal importance, he adds, is the fact that nostalgia is not a demanding sentiment. It "places the emphasis on following in ancestral ways," he remarks, "rather than on the specifics of those ways."

As Eisen sees it, the desire among Jews for assimilation combines with the strong pull of nostalgia to make certain observances more attractive than others. Today, he suggests, a given ritual is more likely to be followed if its message is "universal" rather than "tribal," and if it "wraps participants in memories" linking them to their forebears. The popularity of Passover and Hanukkah are thus explained by the twin facts that their themes can be readily broadened and secularized—turning them, respectively, into celebrations of "freedom" and "religious liberty"—and that they have strong associations with family and home.

But Eisen goes further. If a Jewish ritual is to succeed, he argues, it cannot dictate a particular theological view. It must leave "Jews free to search for an ultimate authority which can direct their rituals and their lives." Indeed, to the extent that observance has come to assume importance in the lives of many modern Jews, he asserts, it has done so precisely because it deflects attention from basic issues of faith. "This latitude," he writes, "helps to account for the fact that many 'non-believing' Jews have continued to hold Passover seders, to fast on Yom Kippur, and to circumcise their newborn sons."

Far from deprecating this phenomenon, Eisen approves of it—theologically, one might say. Even when Jews do not see themselves as obeying God's will, he does not hesitate to use the traditional term *mitzvah*—commandment—in speaking of their ritual observances. For Eisen, commandment simply describes what Jews do in an attempt to express themselves as Jews. "If we ignore this wider definition of *mitzvah*," he writes, "we miss a great deal of reflection and activity undertaken in response to the distinctive Jewish identity that such Jews recognize and wish to maintain."

ARNOLD EISEN has certainly chosen an opportune time to "rethink" the place of observance in modern Judaism. Ritual practice is now enjoying a significant flowering on the American Jewish scene, and in every denominational sector. Even the Reform movement is considering a new statement of principles that commends, among other things, keeping kosher and abstaining from work on the Sabbath. Among the Orthodox, ritual observance is at an all-time high, with new religious paraphernalia—like prefabricated "tabernacles" for dwelling out of doors during the week of Sukkot—constantly coming onto the market.

Considering the varied forms that this renewed interest has taken, however, one cannot but be surprised that Eisen has ignored the important differences with respect to ritual that separate the major denominations of contemporary American Judaism. Throughout this book, indeed, his account is strangely flat and abstract, peopled by generic Jewish "actors" rather than distinct Jewish types, and relying more on academic theories of modernization than on observation of lived experience. As a result, not only does he treat the realm of ritual itself as an undifferentiated whole, considering no practice more or less central to Judaism than any other, but he fails to distinguish between the occasional dabbler in observance and the person for whom observance is a constant concern.

In a related vein, Eisen is surely right to argue that nostalgia is a chief motivating factor behind much of the contemporary turn to ritual. Though it is hardly to be derided on that account, what is gained by referring to such observance as a response to "commandment"? After all, a commandment implies a commander—or, in the traditional scheme, a Commander. Who exactly is doing the commanding in the "*mitzvah* of nostalgia"? And what feeling of obligation is associated with this "commandment"? Most Jews who engage in Jewish ritual out of sentiment for

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the past are happy to leave matters at that level. Eisen should take their behavior at face value.

If Eisen's promiscuous use of religious language serves any purpose, it is to remind us what Judaism has lost in the various attempts to modernize it. Now, as in the past, a commonsense formula holds true: the greater the feeling of commandment, the greater the extent of ritual observance. Welcome though the current turn to ritual is, it seems unlikely to endure if it is not accompanied by a revival of a more far-reaching and spiritual sort.

No Bright Lines

All the Laws But One:
Civil Liberties in Wartime
by William H. Rehnquist
Knopf. 256 pp. $26.00

Reviewed by
Andrew C. McCarthy

WHAT IS the proper balance between two imperatives of government: preserving civil liberties and protecting national security? As it happens, this question is very much before us. Over the course of the 1990's, Islamic extremists have been waging a war against the United States, bombing American embassies and military compounds overseas as well as targets here at home, including the World Trade Center. More recently, President Clinton has acknowledged this terrorist war, proposing measures to combat it that, in turn, have roused the ire of civil libertarians.

As the agitated reaction to Clinton's proposals suggests, threats to our national security expose a vulnerable seam in the fabric of the American political order. Even during peacetime, security and freedom only grudgingly coexist, and in times of actual war the friction can become truly intense, as Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist demonstrates in his new book.

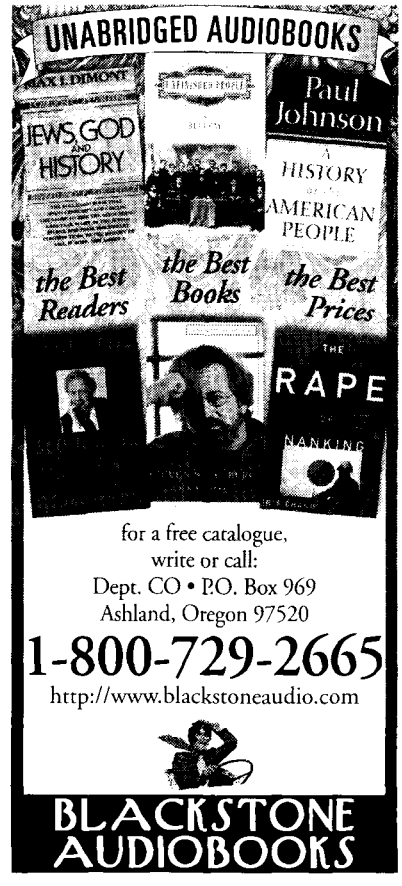
An important historical figure in his own right—for over a quarter century, he has helped to steer the Supreme Court away from its imperial excesses—Rehnquist has also demonstrated a passion for writing about history. His previous book, *Grand Inquests: The Historic Impeachments of Justice Samuel Chase and President Andrew Johnson* (1993), has recently been back in demand—for obvious reasons. Considering the external threats the country is facing today, his current brisk and engaging examination of American notions about civil liberties during wartime is no less timely.

ALTHOUGH HE briefly explores the early Republic, stopping to consider the actions of Andrew Jackson during the War of 1812 (displeased with a court order challenging his administration of martial law, then-General Jackson simply had the offending judge arrested and forcibly marched out of town), the bulk of Rehnquist's discussion in *All the Laws But One* is devoted to the great struggle between individual freedom and social order that arose during the Civil War and its aftermath. He takes up the story at America's most uncertain hour: the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in late April 1861 as a wave of secession swept the South. With the Union's survival hanging in the balance, Abraham Lincoln, newly elected, heeded the urgent advice of his Secretary of State and suspended the writ of *habeas corpus*.

A product of English common law, *habeas corpus* is such a bedrock protection of personal liberty that the framers enshrined it in the Constitution. It enables anyone detained by government to seek redress from a federal judge, who may then issue a writ to the arresting official requiring him to show cause. Under the Civil War regime of martial law, thousands were deprived of this fundamental protection, tried for offenses running the gamut from mere criticism of the government to outright sedition, and sentenced, often harshly, by military commissions.

With lavish attention to historical detail, Rehnquist demonstrates why the excesses of that period were all but inevitable: in crises involving national survival, the President must act quickly and forcefully, which often entails riding roughshod over slow-moving courts. It is true, as Rehnquist also notes, that judges do eventually gain an opportunity to review claims of executive abuse, but this usually does not occur until months or even years after the fact—cold comfort, he readily concedes, to those whose rights have been trampled.

ANDREW C. MCCARTHY, *an attorney in Connecticut, was the lead federal prosecutor in the 1995 World Trade Center bombing trial.*



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Nevertheless, the system, imperfect as it is, does have clear benefits. It gives the President a wide berth to put down hostilities, and it allows the law to evolve in a direction that, despite everything, remains respectful of individual liberty. This is precisely what happened one year after fighting concluded in the Civil War. In the *Milligan* case, decided in 1866, the Supreme Court roundly rejected the government's contentions that *habeas corpus* could be suspended without an act of Congress, and that the Bill of Rights was a nullity in time of war.

THE PATTERN established in the Civil War was repeated during the 20th century's two great armed conflicts, which Rehnquist treats in briefer compass. Under both Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, there were deprivations of fundamental rights that seem startling today. In World War I, Postmaster General Albert Burleson used anti-sedition legislation as a license to squelch press criticism of the war; offending publications were simply denied the mail service they needed to reach their readers. And after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Roosevelt subjected virtually everyone of Japanese descent on the West Coast to curfew, relocation, and internment.

In a thoughtful discussion of the latter act, Rehnquist shows that, for over 150 years, American law had held that citizens of an enemy state could be subject to arrest during wartime; the presumption was that such aliens, even legal ones, owed their allegiance not to the United States but to a hostile power. Rounding up Japanese aliens during World War II, therefore, was altogether within the law. But indiscriminately corralling American *citizens* of Japanese heritage was another matter entirely—and, as Rehnquist confirms, both unjust and unjustified. It took decades before appropriate reparations were made.

Still, if Roosevelt went much too far, the internment episode does raise the very real question of how this country should respond if a foreign enemy should one day derive key assistance from an unassimilated immigrant group. Under what circumstances, if any, is it proper for government to target members of a particular ethnicity for special scrutiny? The question is not an idle one. It has arisen most recently in the controversy over the procedures introduced at airports to screen for potential terrorists—and it has not yet been satisfactorily resolved.

Nor is it resolved here. While Rehnquist is superb at relating the tension between government power and individual liberty over the course of American history, the reader anxious to know exactly where the Chief Justice would draw the line today will come away disappointed. In part, this no doubt owes to the nature of Rehnquist's job, which inhibits him from commenting on knotty questions that might well come before the Court. Mainly, however, one suspects Rehnquist offers no bright-line distinctions because there can be none. To preserve our cherished rights, we want the executive restrained; but the degree to which we want it restrained unavoidably turns on the degree of the country's vulnerability at any given point—something that is hard enough to gauge in retrospect, let alone while hostilities are under way.

But there is another side to this particular coin. Not only does the calm of peacetime tend to ameliorate the infringements of liberty that come with war, as *All the Laws But One* makes clear; but that process of amelioration can itself on occasion extend too far. Consider the fact that international terrorists who have murdered U.S. soldiers and civilians *en masse* are now extradited to the United States, tried in our federal courts, and vested with all the protections afforded by American law. Through the mechanism of discovery proceedings, they are even given access to U.S. government intelligence that can help them defend themselves in court—and can also help to augment the menace they and their confederates pose.

We have thus come a long distance from the time when, as during the Civil War, U.S. citizens were deprived of their rights and tried by military courts. Today, foreign armed adversaries are tried by our civilian courts and given full legal privileges. This, too, points to a central lesson of Chief Justice Rehnquist's lesson-filled book: when it comes to civil liberties in wartime, the pendulum swings back and forth. Sometimes it swings too far in both directions.

Silver Threads

Gray Dawn: How the Coming Age Wave Will Transform America—And the World

by Peter G. Peterson

Times Books-Random House. 288 pp. $23.00

Reviewed by
Chester E. Finn, Jr.

THERE ARE some subjects from which I, at the age of fifty-four, readily avert my gaze. Most of these concern the miseries that lie in wait for aging boomer-geezers like me in the coming 21st century, not only because we will inexorably grow frail but also—as we are constantly being reminded—because we will be so numerous while the young people who will be around to tend to our needs will be so few.

Hence it was with some trepidation that I approached Peter G. Peterson's latest alarum on the "coming age wave." A former Commerce Secretary (in the Nixon administra-

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tion), a big-league investor, and a participant in innumerable conclaves, Peterson has earned a reputation for Malthusian predictions and harsh remedies for the country's and the world's social and economic woes. Among his earlier targets of concern was the federal deficit; as a co-founder (with the late Senator Paul Tsongas) of the Concord Coalition, Peterson lobbied for a cold bath of tax hikes and spending cuts to bring our finances into balance.

This book is Peterson's second attempt to address the problems posed by the swelling numbers of oldsters. An earlier effort, *Will America Grow Up Before It Grows Old?* (1997),* focused on the United States; this time, Peterson's perspective is global. Marshaling a formidable army of statistics, he paints a sobering factual picture. From now until 2050, the number of people aged sixty-five to eighty-four will increase threefold, while those aged eighty and older will increase sixfold; and hundred-year-olds and older will increase over sixteenfold. At the midpoint of the next century, people aged eighty and above will comprise at least 10 percent of the populations of thirteen countries.

Just how bad is all this? On behalf of those now enjoying their second half-centuries, I am not too depressed to learn that the numbers of people who will live to the centennial mark will multiply by sixteen. And as one whose father recently turned a vigorous eighty, I am not altogether upset to read that the population of octogenarians will sextuple. Such statistics attest to improved health, extended life expectancies, greater prosperity, and more. They are good news—cause not for fretting but for celebration.

But Peterson is an incurable fretter. Even though he half-recognizes that old folks are not *simply* a societal liability, mostly he fixates on, and worries about, the public-policy issues posed by an aging population. Some of these are familiar, others less so.

In the former category come such chestnuts as what to do about Social Security and other pensions, and how to pay for health care. About these, Peterson does have fresh things to say. He offers an incisive progress report, for example, on the social-security revolution that Margaret Thatcher initiated in Britain in 1986. The remarkable fact is that today, only 17 percent of the British workforce remains in the traditional government pension system. Offered the chance to receive a rebate on payroll taxes, the majority opted either to enter privately-funded employer plans or to rely on personal retirement accounts. A similar revolution is under way in Australia. As the experience of these two countries suggests, it is by no means inevitable that publicly provided pensions will forever remain the principal source of retirement income in advanced welfare-state democracies.

Peterson's worldwide perspective on aging also yields some worthwhile insights into our own future place in the planet's demographic ranking. By 2050, he notes, the U.S. will be the *only* developed nation among the dozen most populous countries in the world. (Today, we share that status with Russia, Japan, and Germany.) What will enable us to maintain our position, however, is not our fertility rate but rather immigration, which we encourage but Europe does not. Only the arrival of millions of working-age immigrants and their children, mostly from the developing world, will prevent our "ratio of money-givers to money-takers" (i.e., workers to retirees) from plummeting as far as in

* Reviewed by Daniel Casse in the January 1997 COMMENTARY.

Once upon a time, there was a young man named Ken who collected books. Soon, there were so many books, and so little room, that he realized he had to become a bookdealer and move to bigger digs.

Ken married Jane and they moved to an old brick firehouse in Western Massachusetts. They filled the building with shelves and their growing collection remarkable books.

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Europe and Japan. By 2050, Peterson forecasts, we will be down to 2.3 taxpayers per pensioner (compared with 4.2 today), whereas France will fall to 1.4 and Italy to an astounding 0.7.

Some of Peterson's more absorbing pages contain speculation on precisely how these changes may impinge on foreign as well as domestic affairs. Will the European Union crumble under demographic pressure as unfunded public-pension liabilities in Italy and other lands lead to runaway government borrowing that will destabilize the continent's economy? As populations shrink and age, will developed nations become more self-absorbed, less willing (or able) to attend to developments beyond their borders? Will the U.S. be capable of maintaining a strong defense and a vigorous international presence when more of our own energies and resources become consumed by the appetites, and medical bills, of a graying population? Will American domestic politics evolve into generational strife? And most crucially, what kinds of political and cultural perplexities will ensue from treating immigration as a substitute for having babies?

These questions, unanswerable today, are nevertheless worth thinking about. Peterson can imagine today's obsession with youth and novelty being trumped by "a world in which newness is shunned, markets are restrained, and risks are feared." Although this seems far-fetched, he is surely right that the preferences and pastimes of the elderly will occupy a growing share of both our culture and our economy. The already proliferating elder hostels, cruises, and golf courses will one day be joined by cable channels and talk shows specializing in the interests of the "post-retirement" generation.

PETERSON BRIMS with advice about how to make the most of the impending demographic shift. We should, he says, encourage longer working lives rather than early retirement; enlarge the working-age labor force (mainly through immigration); "raise more—and more productive—children"; stress filial obligation so that people look after their aging parents instead of consigning them to the ministrations of government; attach means tests to public benefits (i.e., be less generous with Social Security, Medicare, and the like for those who do not need them); and compel people to save for their own old age via a mandatory private-pension system.

One may quibble with some of these specifics. Peterson is still overly fond of what I would call the root-canal approach to social policy, whereby government makes people behave properly through coercive measures rather than (as in the British pension scheme) creating options and trusting that most will make sound choices. Yet the gist of his ideas is sensible. What is finally disappointing about this book, however, as with its predecessor, is Peterson's utter failure to sketch a plausible path from here to there.

On the domestic side, he does not get much beyond proclaiming the urgent need to roll up our sleeves and set to work. On the international side, he offers the feeblest advice imaginable, in the form of an "open letter" to world leaders urging a "major summit on global aging" and the establishment of a new international organization (dubbed, naturally, the Agency on Global Aging).

Still, *Gray Dawn* is hardly to be dismissed. It contains a great deal of information and much clear thinking, and presents a number of reasonable objectives toward which we should strive. A fretter, Peterson is far from being a hysteric—there is no talk here of a "population bomb" outstripping the planet's resources, or of famine and revolution stalking the globe. If, as his book shows, we have made little progress in preparing for the future, at least we are now, in part thanks to voices like his, beginning to ponder our problems in a serious way. The older I grow, the more I appreciate that.

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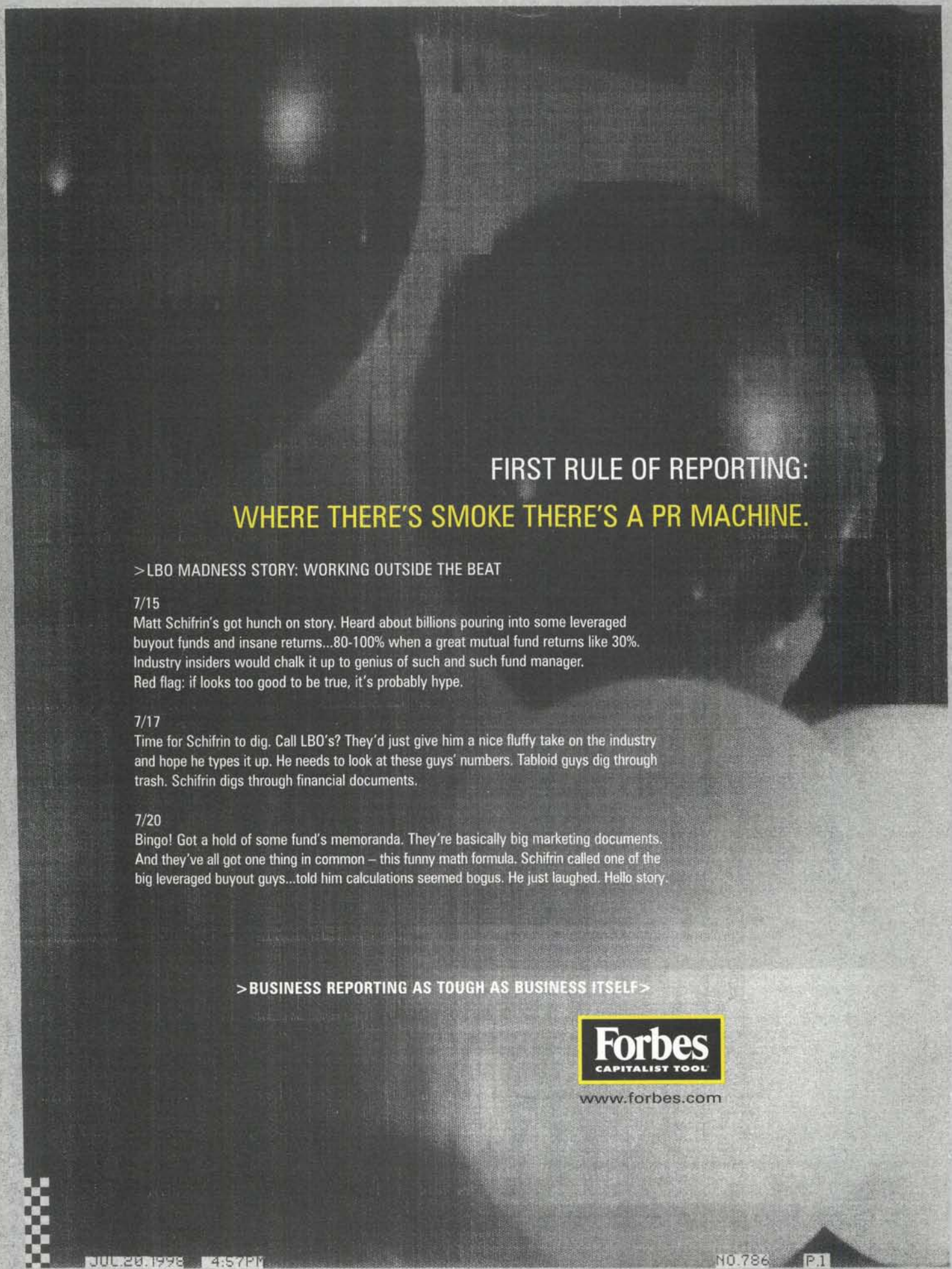
FIRST RULE OF REPORTING:
WHERE THERE'S SMOKE THERE'S A PR MACHINE.
>LBO MADNESS STORY: WORKING OUTSIDE THE BEAT
7/15
Matt Schifrin's got hunch on story. Heard about billions pouring into some leveraged buyout funds and insane returns...80-100% when a great mutual fund returns like 30%. Industry insiders would chalk it up to genius of such and such fund manager. Red flag: if looks too good to be true, it's probably hype.
7/17
Time for Schifrin to dig. Call LBO's? They'd just give him a nice fluffy take on the industry and hope he types it up. He needs to look at these guys' numbers. Tabloid guys dig through trash. Schifrin digs through financial documents.
7/20
Bingo! Got a hold of some fund's memoranda. They're basically big marketing documents. And they've all got one thing in common – this funny math formula. Schifrin called one of the big leveraged buyout guys...told him calculations seemed bogus. He just laughed. Hello story.
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